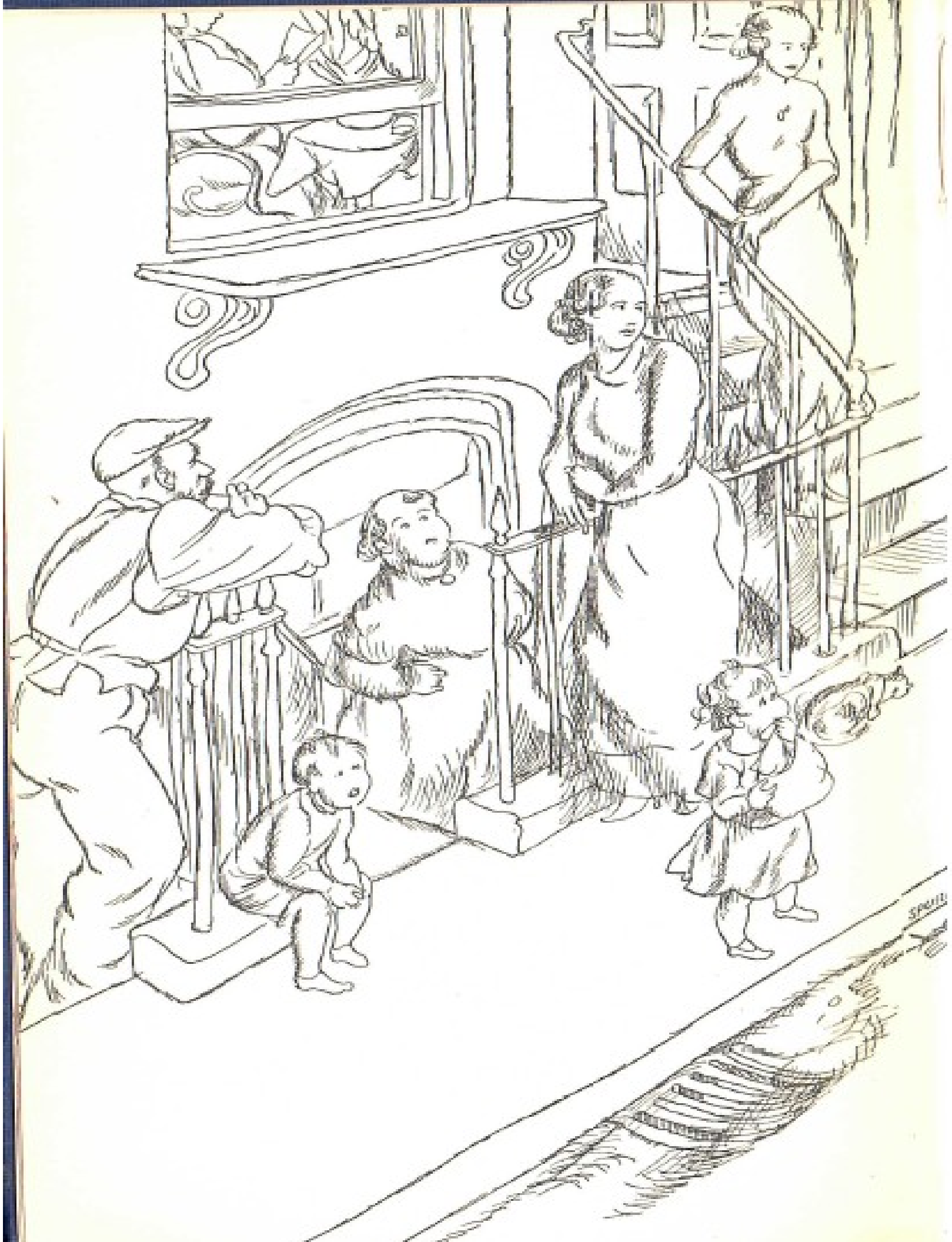
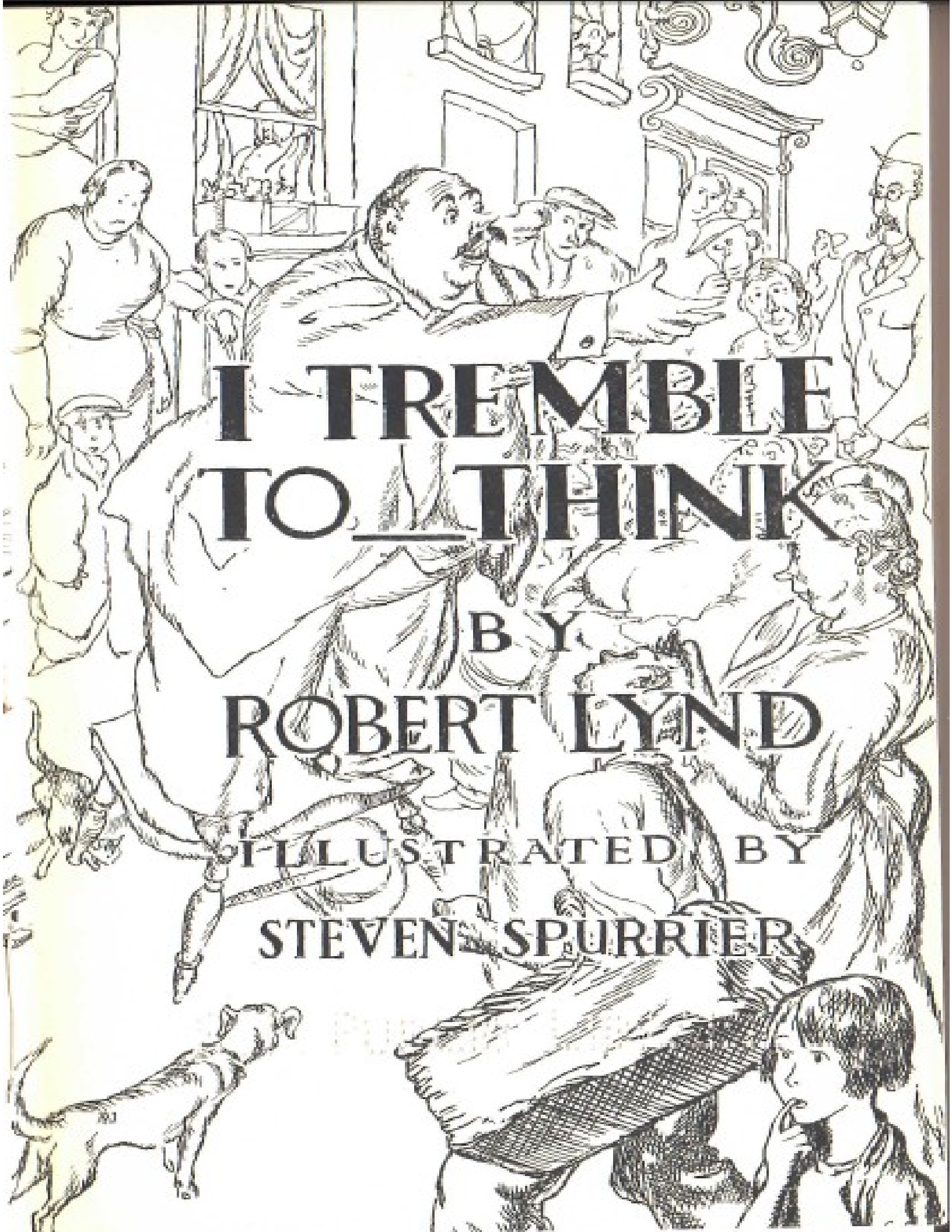


I TREMBLE TO THINK

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I TREMBLE TO THINK

BY
ROBERT LYND

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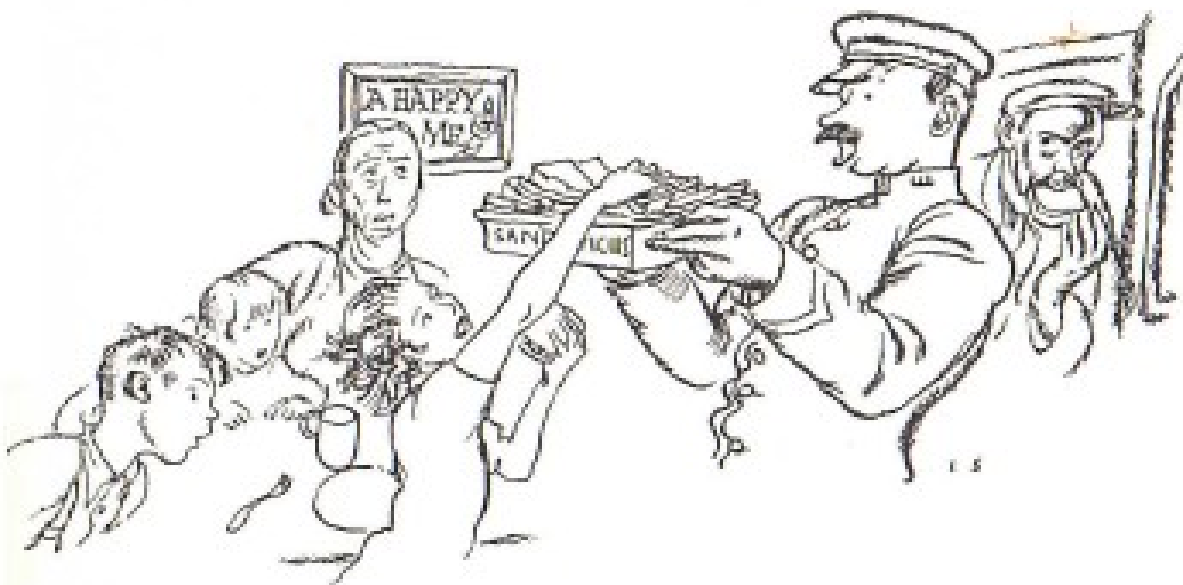
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TO
HARRIET AND R. ELLIS ROBERTS

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I TREMBLE TO THINK

THERE are public speakers and writers of letters to newspapers who, when they wish to be particularly impressive, begin a sentence with the words: 'I tremble to think.' These people usually tremble to think what would happen if some ridiculously modest proposal were acted upon. In the House of Lords recently a peer confessed that he trembled to think what would happen to British agriculture if admittedly cruel rabbit-traps were abolished. I was not present at the debate, so that I cannot say for certain whether or not the noble lord's hand really shook or his voice really quivered as he spoke the fateful words. People who tremble to think are usually, in my experience, as cool as cucumbers. A man who trembles to think in a public speech has commonly

forgotten all about the matter by the time dinner is on the table.

A short time ago, a correspondent, writing to a great newspaper in defence of the sale and export of arms to foreign countries, declared that he trembled to think of the horrors and cruelties that would have taken place in the Chaco War if the combatants on both sides had not been provided by more advanced countries with the most efficient modern weapons. Did he really tremble as he compared the lot of men massacred and mutilated by the very latest thing in shells with that of their hapless ancestors who fought with stones and knives and bows and arrows? Did he tremble to think what a hell war would have been if some kindly inventor had not tempered its harshness with the discovery of poison gas? A man must have very little to tremble to think about who trembles to think how horrible war would have been without the most modern products of the manufacturers of munitions and armaments. He would be better engaged, I fancy, in trembling to think what will happen to the world if the use of these humane killers and humane maimers and mutilators ever becomes general again.

As a rule, a man who trembles to think is a man who has scarcely paused to think. He is a

defender of things as they are because he cannot imagine the world other than it is. A few months ago he trembled to think what would happen to cricket if the new l.b.w. law were passed. Before the War he trembled to think what would happen if women got the vote. I knew an excellent Radical who was so perturbed by the prospect of sex-equality that he had a nightmare vision of an England in which men charged with any offence against women, however innocent they might be, would be convicted by merciless juries of women and condemned to long terms of imprisonment. He was himself a model citizen, but he was convinced that women had no sense of justice, and that under the reign of women—who are after all in a majority and would, of course, all vote and act together—the liberty of a model male citizen would hang by a thread. It is hardly necessary to point out that nothing of the sort that he foresaw has happened. Men would not tremble to think so often if they realized that, so far as legislation is concerned, the things that people fear, like the things that people hope, seldom come to pass. Or it might be nearer the truth to say that neither great apprehension nor great hope is, as a rule, justified by the event.

I do not know how old the phrase 'I tremble

to think' is, but I fancy it must have come into common use not long after the discovery of the art of controversy. It is easy to imagine that, when Moses brought down the Ten Commandments, there were discontented Israelites who trembled to think of the consequences of these invasions of individual liberty. What, for example, they might have asked, was likely to be the effect of the Commandment 'Honour thy father and thy mother' on family life? Human nature being what it is, was it wise to make filial piety compulsory? Would not the element of compulsion in the Commandment defeat its purpose? Was there not some justification for the fear that many children, who would otherwise have been devoted to their parents, would be driven into rebellion through irritation at filial love's being made a matter of law and associated with vulgar reward? Arguments as specious have been put forward against many of the good laws that have been passed since the time of Moses.

There are people still living who once trembled to think what would happen to family life if hungry schoolchildren were fed at the public expense. In the first place, they thought, this would destroy the parental sense of responsibility and put an end to that thrift which is so strong a tie between underpaid parent and underfed

child. Home would cease to be sweet home if mothers had no longer to deny themselves the necessities of life in order to keep the bodies and souls of their infants together. The sanctity of family life must not be violated by free sandwiches. I happen to believe in the institution of the family, but I could never see how underfeeding children was the best way to preserve it. Similarly, I could never see how the institution of the family was imperilled by the work of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Yet many people once trembled to think what the consequences would be if the prying officials of this society were permitted to interfere with the sacred relationship between a parent and a child who suffered miseries unspeakable at his hands.

Children indeed have had some odd defenders. Many people used to tremble to think what would happen to them if the half-time system were abolished in the factories. The child, we were told, became an asset to the home when it was allowed to work in a factory at an early age. Without its small wage, it would become a burden and therefore, perhaps, incur a certain unpopularity with the older members of the household. And the half-time system was also defended by those who trembled to think what

would happen to industry without child labour. I remember reading a speech by an eminent statesman in which he declared that child labour was the corner-stone of the linen industry and that without child labour the industry could not continue. Since then the industry has had its ups and downs, but its downs have been due not to the abolition of child labour, but to changes of fashion and competition from Japan and elsewhere.

The protection of the aged like the protection of children has found its chief opponents in people addicted to trembling to think. There was a great deal of trembling to think when old-age pensions were first proposed. Men who had inherited vast riches trembled to think how the spirit of thrift would be undermined in labourers earning thirty shillings a week, if, without contributing a penny towards it, they were sure of getting five shillings a week as soon as they reached the age of sixty-five or seventy. Who, with this small fortune awaiting him, could fail to play the spendthrift with his pennies in the intervening years? The sturdy independence for which the Englishman was famous all over the world would be gone. The national character would be sapped. A race of free men would be converted into a race of state-aided beggars. And so forth.

For many years, too, we have had people who have tried to make us tremble to think of the consequences of our giving occasional pennies to street-musicians and other mendicants. To give a penny to a poor man, we have been told, is an act of self-indulgence performed at the expense of the poor man's strength of character. We are tempting him to go on indolently blowing into a cornet in the streets instead of making a man of himself at honest work. Apparently it is the character only of a poor man that you can undermine: give a rich man all the oysters, champagne, and cigars that he can consume, and, at the end of it all, his character remains as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar.

I am inclined to the opinion that people who tremble to think are nearly always wrong. I doubt whether they tremble, and I am sure they seldom think. They are usually people who are irritated by change, especially by some change that interferes, however slightly, with their interests or pleasures. Many motorists trembled to think of the consequences of the imposition of the speed limit in built-up areas. They said that this would make people drive faster in built-up areas and so increase the dangers of the streets. They persuaded themselves that other motorists, instead of regarding thirty miles an

hour as a maximum speed in towns, would regard it as a minimum, and would rush wildly through crowded streets in which they ought to proceed at a careful crawl. Of course, nothing of the kind happened. The speed limit has produced, not a more dangerous motorist, but only a more dangerous pedestrian.

Let us then cease to tremble to think, and take to thinking instead. If we do, we may even discover some way by which agriculture can be preserved without the torture every year of millions of rabbits and other wild creatures. If we cannot abolish admitted cruelty, I tremble to think of the future of civilization.





It is one of the worst things about a holiday that nobody is content to sit still and do nothing. After breakfast the visitors at the hotel stroll languidly out on to the sunny lawn and let themselves down into deck-chairs, looking as if they neither desired nor were capable of effort. They are almost too lazy to read the newspapers they are holding. To draw tobacco-smoke into their mouths and puff it out again seems to be the greatest strain they are willing to put on their muscular system for the day. The air they are breathing is probably as good air as is to be found anywhere in the neighbourhood. There is no reason why any of them should budge till lunch-time except to pat the black spaniel that goes restlessly on his rounds, wagging his tail in greeting to strangers. In the mild wind the poplar leaves make a soothing and monotonous sound like rain. The crow of a cock, the quack of a duck, unmusical as they are, are on such a morning the music of idle summer. How unenviable seems the world outside the garden—the foolish motorists packed in their closed cars,

the hikers in their strange costumes, and all the noisy traffic of those who cannot be still!

You would imagine that no one endowed with common sense could be tempted out of his chair while the sun continued to shine. Yet so strong is the passion for going somewhere else that, one by one or two by two, the visitors rise and disappear in their cars or set off to the river or make with grim determination for the top of the only hill that is visible for miles. In less than an hour you notice that the lawn is deserted except for yourselves. Then you, too, begin to be aware of a mysterious stirring in your blood, like a bird at the migration season. You have hired a boat for the week-end on the previous evening, and you cannot resist the summons of the boat. You go down to the riverside to sit down on an extremely hard seat and pull into the teeth of a wind that is blowing three times as strongly there as in the garden. I confess I find rowing extraordinarily tiring. When I am on the bank I envy people in a boat, but when I am rowing a boat I feel far from enviable. I try steering instead, but, whether it is that the rowers are pulling unevenly or that the wind is forcing the nose of the boat out of a straight course, I find that steering also is a full-time job. In avoiding one bank I make for the other, which in its turn



NOBODY IS CONTENT TO SIT STILL AND DO NOTHING

has to be avoided. Swimmers, too, get in the way. I carefully twist round a bather blindly trudgeoning his way across the river, his face buried deep in the water at one moment and then emerging with a vast puffing and gasping, as though he were on the verge of an apoplectic stroke. I thought to myself, as I watched some of these violent swimmers, how overworked they would feel if they did this sort of thing under compulsion. Floating in salt water I can understand as a holiday recreation, but this swimming at racing speed is the very negation of indolence. Nor was the tall man standing in the punt and toiling along the stream with his punt-pole a figure emblematic of August idleness. He, too, was one of the world's workers, sweating after happiness. It was as though the curse of Adam had fallen on man, not only at labour, but at play. 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,' has been given the addition: 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou enjoy a holiday.'

And the odd thing is that it is only during holidays that many of us become victims of this passion for the strenuous life. I myself, if I wished, could take a walk, for example, on almost any day of the year; but I seldom do so. I can find a hundred excuses for sitting in a chair or for being driven from this place to that

instead of walking. Let me loose on a holiday, however, and, before I know what I am doing, I am walking till I feel more tired than after the hardest day's work I have ever done in my life. I doubt, indeed, whether work is as tiring an occupation as pleasure. After a day's work one has a refreshing sense that the thing is over and one is now a free man. After a day's pleasure, walking to the top of a hill and back again or on the golf-course, however, one has—or at least I have—a feeling of utter exhaustion. It usually takes me a full working week to recover physically from a week's pleasure. Last week I regretted setting out for the top of the little hill long before I had reached the top of it. Sky-blue butterflies fluttered in hundreds among the long grass as one climbed, and even on a Bank Holiday the world was empty of one's fellow-men to the eye as far as the hills on the sky-line. But, even with these compensations, what a toil it was to trudge up the slope! What gouty drops of sweat fell from what exhausted temples! One of my companions announced that he had been told of a short cut home over the fields. That would have revived my drooping spirits but for the fact that, after a long experience of them, I have a rooted distrust of short cuts. My distrust was justified. We entered a field of

stubble, where the foot sank at every step into the soft earth. We passed into another field of stubble, where the going was still heavier. When we had walked more miles than the outward journey, we were obviously farther from our hotel than ever. At last we met a tramp sitting at the edge of a field, who suggested that the best way to get home was to go back to the road at the point at which we had started on the short cut. There was no road before us, he assured us, if we went forward. We should reach the river, however, and could find a way home along the towpath. When we reached the towpath, three anglers were lying asleep on the banks, fishing in their sleep with their heads lying on the butts of their fishing-rods so that a bite would awaken them. How pleasant it must be to be able to sleep in the daytime! How much better than tramping, endlessly tramping through stubble-fields! We arrived back an hour late for lunch, I a wreck of my morning self. The visitor who was supposed to have spoken of the short cut explained that he had recommended the walk home through the fields not as a short cut, but because of its beauty. It was, as a matter of fact, he said, several miles longer than the way home by the road. But how invisible beauty, even the beauty of the blue chicory in

the cornfields, becomes when one is looking for a short cut and not finding it!

There were, I admit, compensations during the afternoon. Restlessness drove us to the boat once more. Once more we toiled up-stream at the oar and the rudder. And, as we toiled, I caught sight of a bird as it disappeared into a thorn-bush. We rowed slowly towards the bush, and, as we approached it, a kingfisher flew out and off up the river. Even the tired helmsman is stirred into new life by the sight of a kingfisher. There is no other bird that seems in its flight to be an insubstantial thing made entirely of light and colour. It is a rapid blue flame that mingles with a rapid red flame when the sun catches its breast-feathers. We pulled the boat in under a willow farther down the river and waited for the reappearance of the kingfisher while motor-boats and punts laboured past. After a time it obliged us by perching on a post under the opposite bank. It was a mere speck of blue when its back was turned towards us, of red when its breast was turned, but we sat still and watched it in the hope of seeing it diving or taking to flight again. It scarcely moved for a quarter of an hour, but its presence and the reflections of the clouds and the willows in the sunny water made it easy to be patient. After a time another

shaft of blue light sped through the air and was lost in a willow. It uttered a cry, and the kingfisher opposite joined it. We waited patiently for their reappearance, and when our patience was exhausted pulled the boat as quietly as tip-toeing over to the willow. We approached it so silently that neither of the birds was aware of our presence when we caught hold of the branches. The bird, evidently an infant, that was perched on a lower branch, almost within arm's length, was moving its head up and down as though hiccuping after an excess of fish. A stranger appeared behind the tree and frightened the parent bird. It fluttered round the younger, crying to it to leave the tree, but in the end had to go off alone. The younger remained, sometimes staring down its beak into the water, sometimes preening its feathers, and shifting on its perch so that now we saw its breast and now its back. Midges bit us, but we dared not move a hand to brush them away. I longed for a cigarette but was afraid to make a noise by lighting one. If you care for this sort of thing, you are ready to undergo all kinds of hardships simply in order to be able to go on staring at the back of a kingfisher. That path of lustrous pale blue leading from neck to tail between the short dark wings is certainly one of

the loveliest spectacles in Nature. After a time the other bird returned, and the pair of them took up their positions at the mouth of a tributary stream and began diving for fish. From where I was sitting I could not see them as they touched the water, but even to hear the plop it was well worth abstaining from tobacco.

And yet, after watching the kingfishers for the better part of an hour, I must confess that the bird is not quite so beautiful when seen sitting still, close at hand, as during flight. It is only when speeding through the air that the blue of its back and the chestnut of its breast reach their full perfection of colour and fire. In flight, it becomes the precious stone among birds and more beautiful than any precious stone. It is one of Nature's arguments against rest and in favour of activity. It may be that holiday-makers busily bathing and punting along the river in summer white are others.





SWEETS

FIFTY million pounds are spent every year in Great Britain on chocolates and confectionery. So it is announced in a paragraph relating to the Chocolate and Confectionery Exhibition at Olympia. Statistics are often depressing nowadays, but the figures I have quoted give us grounds for believing that the world is in some important respects a better place to-day than it has ever been before. What child of any age, since Moses lay in the ark of bulrushes, would not wish to have been born into a world containing such mountains of edible happiness? The city child has been robbed of much—of the country spectacle with its lavish variety of flowers and animals—but in compensation he has

been given sweets such as his country predecessors never knew. He has lost Wordsworthian delights, but has been given in exchange the riches of the sweet-shop window.

I do not know enough social history to be able to say when the democratization of sweets began. Sweets can scarcely have become the universal food of children while sugar remained an expensive luxury, as it did, apparently, until the eighteenth century. There were sweets in Shakespeare's day, but I doubt whether the children of the poor often tasted the marchpane and kissing comfits which are mentioned in his plays. There were, we are told, no confectioners, as we now know them, till the nineteenth century. Until then sweet-making was in the hands of druggists—which suggests that the ancestor of all those delicacies that are eaten to-day in defiance of the laws of health was that medical utility, the cough-drop. Even to-day the chemist remains half a confectioner, with his liquorice, his pastilles, and his glass jars full of marshmallows. As in the world of sport, however, what was once done for utilitarian ends is now done for pleasure. The sportsman with his gun has turned the work of his forefathers into an amusement, and the child of to-day sucks for pure joy the jujube, the

counterpart of which was sucked two hundred years ago as a cure.

How fortunate that doctors once thought that sweets were good for us! There are few things, I imagine, that have made a greater contribution to the physical happiness of mankind. How the infant imagination is stirred by the sight of those crowded boxes and bottles in the sweet-shop window! If the small boy has only a penny clutched tightly in his hand, let him be sure to make up his mind what he wants to buy before he enters the shop. If he does not, what agonies of indecision he will experience when he stands before the counter and sees all those glass jars of loveliness, each of them inviting him to ignore its rivals and to make it his choice! How is it possible for him to be sure whether he wants bull's-eyes more than brandy-balls, pear-drops more than barley-sugar? He wants everything he sees. There is not a jar in the shop the sight of which does not fill him with an ache of longing from his gullet down to the pit of his stomach. Great are the joys of greed, but great also are its sufferings. The choice is easier to make if he has a sister with whom he is expected to share his treasures and who, he knows, dislikes some particular kind of sweets, such as coco-nut chips. If he is a selfish boy, it is



THOSE GLASS JARS OF LOVELINESS

perfectly easy: he buys coco-nut chips. If he is an unselfish boy, he hesitates for a moment, and buys coco-nut chips. It is all very well to reproach the young with greed, but have you ever felt that pang of desire for almond rock and the more bitter pang of having to share it with so many others that there was only a tiny fragment left for yourself?

There is, I admit, something peculiarly obnoxious about a boy who eats sweets in company and never offers one to a friend: I knew such a boy, and we all regarded him as a boy who would live to be hanged. At the same time, many a well-meaning boy has bought a packet of sweets with the benevolent intention of sharing it with others when he gets home, and, by the time he has reached home, has discovered that somehow or other the packet is finished. I always found it difficult to get home with a box of nougat. When I bought it, I could see in my mind's eye the joyous faces of the others as I shared it with them. But, when I had mounted to the top of a tram, I could not help opening the box, and, when I opened the box, I could not help taking the silver wrapper off one of the pieces to look at it, and, when I took off the silver paper, I could not help eating the nougat. The worst of nougat is that, when you begin

eating it you want to go on eating it, and so I had a second piece. When I had finished the third piece I felt that there was so little left that I could not decently give it to be divided among six, so I ate the last piece, too. Still, I had had my good moment. I had had my dream, and, if my home had not been so far from the shop, the others would have realized what a saint I was. At the same time, all I aspired to be, and was not, did not comfort me quite so easily as Rabbi Ben Ezra was comforted in comparable circumstances. What a greedy hog one seems to oneself after the nougat is finished!

One curious feature of the love of sweets is the way in which it declines with age. There seems to be no reason for this. We still go on eating, and loving the pleasures of the palate, but I imagine that half the confectioners would go out of business if no one under thirty were allowed to eat sweets. There are a hundred greedy sweet-eaters under the age of thirty for one above it. You seldom see a middle-aged man peering with a rapt expression into a confectioner's window. His eyes may goggle before a cake-shop, especially in France, but he seldom gazes at a sweet-shop as if a vision of Heaven had been spread before him. Not that every middle-aged man is as indifferent to sweets as I

am. I know a man of my own age who can eat chocolates even while he is drinking whisky-and-soda. Women, too, nibble sweets after dinner. But they do not get really excited about them, as the young do. I do not know a



EVEN WHILE HE IS DRINKING WHISKY-AND-SODA

single woman who would shout with joy if you offered her a sugar mouse. The sight of a chocolate Easter egg with a sugar hen sitting on it does not send the adult into raptures. Pass round a bagful of acid drops among your friends and see how many of them will thank you.

The test of a true sweet-eater is an almost

indiscriminate love of sweets. He loves everything called sweets, from the despised acid drop to the most delicious sugar almond. He is equally happy whether he is making a swelling in his cheek with an enormous black ball (known in some places as a humbug) or is crunching a nougatine. He adores butter-scotch, but that does not make him despise liquorice laces. He can appreciate the fine flavours of cunningly prepared chocolates, and at the same time do full justice to a peppermint drop. I do not remember disliking a single sweet when I was a child. On the whole, I should have preferred almost any other sweets to aniseed balls, but I could eat aniseed balls. The child has preferences among sweets, but, as a rule, no hatreds.

My own preference was, I think, for almond rock—that dark slab with the islands of nuts in it and the white circumference. At the same time, who could resist the lure of those sweets that changed colour as one sucked them? Was it not one of the marvels of the world that a sweet that was blue when it entered the mouth should have turned a lovely red when one removed it for a look? Suck it a little longer, take it out again, and it will have miraculously turned green. Do the confectioners still make such wonders, or has hygiene suppressed them?

It was the police who suppressed one of the favourite sweets of my childhood. This was a flat honey-flavoured sweet, one sweet standing on the top of another in the packet. One of the chief inducements to buy them was that, if you were lucky, you might find a threepenny bit sandwiched between two of the sweets. As a result, the infancy of the town bought shillings-worths of the stuff in the hope of discovering an unearned threepence. Then a moralist heard of this dangerous incitement to gambling, and suppressed the pretty custom as a lottery. The sweets never tasted quite the same afterwards.

I sometimes wonder whether our later tastes for tobacco, beer, wine, and whisky are sufficient compensation for our loss of the appetite for sweets. One cannot somehow feel the same excitement of choice in a cigarette-shop or a public-house as one once felt in a sweet-shop. If I go in to buy cigarettes, I do not find myself longing for all the brands of cigarettes I see on the shelves or the counter. I do not walk out of the shop with a packet of cigarettes as with a treasure. I buy the stuff not so much for pleasure as for the purpose of avoiding the discomfort of not smoking. Cigar-smokers and wine-experts, they say, retain in their pleasures some of the child's excitement among sweets.

But even they have lost the child's blessed indiscriminateness of enjoyment. Half their pleasure comes from being able to tell the difference between a good wine or cigar and a bad one. The child, on the other hand, is in the happy position of living in a world in which greed and not fastidiousness is the source of pleasure. It has never heard of bad sweets, but loves all sweets with the same large-heartedness with which it loves all fireworks and all the stars.



A. E.

A. E. (George Russell) occupied an extraordinary position in modern Ireland. He was recognized as a prophet by thousands of people, many of whom cared little for his poetry, disliked his painting, and could make nothing of the mystical philosophy that was at the heart of his prophetic genius. Apart from social and political matters, he made comparatively few converts to his opinions, but almost every one who met him became a convert, so to speak, to his greatness. Sitting at work in his upper room in Merrion Square, he was a magnet, not so much for disciples as for delighted listeners to some of the most wonderful talk ever heard in Dublin. Many of those who visited him for the first time must have thrown a perplexed glance at the walls of the room, on which he had painted his pictures of plumed spirit-forms with flames edging their backs, looking (as someone said) like Red Indians, and wondered whether the painter of such eccentric stuff could be taken seriously. But A. E. had only to begin talking for the spell to begin

to work. And he talked to the most unimportant visitor as though talking were his life's work and as though he could go on talking for ever. He was a monologist—one of the few monologists to whom one could listen for hours without being bored.

Sitting in his chair and smoking a pipe—during the last twenty years he smoked a mixture of tobacco and dried coltsfoot leaves, a war-time invention—he was the very picture of copious benevolence as he talked. John Eglinton has described him in his early life as 'a tall youth, with shoulders stooped in the eagerness of perpetual talk, grey and kindly quizzical eyes twinkling behind his glasses, a mass of mouse-coloured hair, and a pugnacious mouth presently hidden behind a benevolent-looking beard'; and one had much the same impression of A. E. till the end. His conversation might consist of a torrent of ideas or a succession of jocular memories, but it was always entrancing because of its energy, its fire, its humour, and its kindliness. He had a marvellous memory, both for what he had read and for what he had experienced. He could illustrate something that he was saying by quoting verbatim a page of prose from a book about Russia, and he could remember every

comic detail about his relations with every odd character he had ever known in Dublin. There are few traces of humour in his writings, but he had a boundless sense of fun in his talk, not least when he was talking of George Moore's apostolic mission to Ireland. Towards the end of his life, he kept urging young writers to sit down and compose a comic saga of Dublin life, based on the stories of the strange characters of the city while they were still remembered.

One of the astonishing things about A. E. was that his talk was so universal in range and yet that he went about the world so little. He had not the ordinary passion for seeing things. Few Irishmen of his standing had visited England so seldom before the War, and even as regards Dublin, when I once spoke to him of the rebuilding of O'Connell Street, then in progress, he said that he had not seen it as he had not been across O'Connell Bridge—a few hundred yards from his office—for the last six months. His adventures were spiritual, not physical. 'Sitting in your chair,' he once wrote, 'you can travel farther than ever Columbus travelled, and to lordlier worlds than his eyes had rested on. Are you tired of surfaces? Come with me, and we will bathe in the Foun-

tains of Youth. I can point you the way to El Dorado.' Many people find this kind of writing a little too transcendental for human nature's daily food, but you had only to look at A. E.'s serene and unwrinkled face—'smooth and serene as a baby's,' as someone said—to feel that here at least was a visionary who had bathed in those mystical fountains.

It was the visionary in him, I imagine, that enabled him to remain so imperturbable during years in which horror and tragedy were all around him. His imperturbability, it is scarcely necessary to say, was never that of aloofness or indifference. No man was more quickly roused to passion by injustice. On the eve of the War, when Larkin had awakened the slum-dwellers of Dublin out of their apathy, A. E. thundered like an Old Testament prophet against employers who were content to perpetuate a system that left men and women with immortal souls to live in squalor and their children to starve. His spirit rose to celebrate an act of heroism. He was not a Sinn Feiner, but he wrote a flaming poem in honour of Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, who died as the result of a hunger-strike in an English prison. Standing outside party politics, he was on the side of all who fought the good fight

and seemed by their lives to be doing something to bring back the lost Heroic Age. In all his social propaganda, when he was preaching co-operation, he was inspired by the vision of an Ireland peopled by noble characters. 'Wherever there is mutual aid . . . ' he declared, 'wherever there is constant give-and-take, wherever the prosperity of the individual depends on the prosperity of the community about him, there the social order tends to produce fine types of character, with a devotion to public ideas; and this is the real object of all government.' A. E. believed in co-operative dairies, not because of the butter they would produce, but because of the character they would produce in the Irish people.

Thus A. E.'s propaganda, his journalism, and his verse were all one. In all of them he called on his fellows, 'outcasts from deity,' to return and regain their lost heritage. As editor of the *Irish Homestead* and the *Irish Statesman*, no less than in his poetry, he was the prophet of a vision. In his prose, however, he was more often a comminating prophet than in his verse, attacking what he regarded as the vices of the Irish people and on one occasion writing: 'Dante had a place in his Inferno for the joyless souls; and, if his conception be true, the

population of that circle will be largely modern Irish.'

Loving his country and devoting his life to its service, he had none of the passions of a partisan, and cared little for national flags and anthems. He wrote his apologia as a somewhat detached visionary in a poem entitled *On Behalf of Some Irishmen Not Followers of Tradition*, ending with the lines:

We would no Irish sign efface,
But yet our lips would gladlier hail
The first-born of the Coming Race
Than the last splendour of the Gael.
No blazoned banner we unfold—
One charge alone we give to youth,
Against the sceptred myth to hold
The golden heresy of truth.

In reply to those who described heretics like himself as aliens, he wrote:

We fling our answer back with scorn:
'We are less children of this clime
Than of some nation yet unborn
Or empire in the womb of time.
We hold the Ireland in the heart
More than the land our eyes have seen,
And love the goal for which we start
More than the tale of what has been.'

Freedom of the spirit, even more than social or political freedom, is the goal which A. E.

sees as the true goal of mankind. He thinks of men as oppressed and imprisoned, not by foreign governments, but by their own pre-occupation with temporal things and their indifference to the things of eternity. The 'outcasts from deity' do not want to regain their lost divinity. In *The Twilight of Earth* he cries :

Will no one, ere it is too late,
Ere fades the last memorial gleam,
Recall for us our earlier state?

For nothing but so vast a dream
That it would scale the steeps of air
Could rouse us from so vast despair.

The power is ours to make or mar
Our fate as on the earliest morn,
The Darkness and the Radiance are
Creatures within the spirit born.
Yet, bathed in gloom too long, we might
Forget how we imagined light.

Not yet are fixed the prison bars;
The hidden light the spirit owns,
If blown to flame would dim the stars
And they who rule them from their thrones:
And the proud sceptred spirits thence
Would bow to pay us reverence.

Many people find poetry of this kind nebulous, like the prose of Emerson. And it must be

owned that, while A. E.'s verse expresses nobly the vision of the spirit, too little of the vision of the eyes has gone to its making. The world represented in it seems at times to be a world of the disembodied moving among jewelled lights. At the same time, while scarcely any one would compare A. E.'s stature as a poet with that of Mr. Yeats, he was a poet of as true and original genius. He was a man who increased the magnanimity of his age both by his life and by his writings, and he wrote poem upon poem that can enchant the imagination even of those who do not share his vision.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

'THE spirit of life that nothing can keep down.'
This line appears twice in Mr. C. Day Lewis's poem, *A Time to Dance*—once in relation to the recklessly daring flight of two airmen to Australia, and once in relation to the revolutionary struggle of the workers towards Communism. It is a moving line in itself and even more in its context, for it is an expression of the heroic spirit. Some time after reading the line, however, I began to wonder whether an ironist with a gift for verse could not write an extremely effective poem in which not only the fair manifestations of the spirit of life were celebrated, but also the foul. The spirit of life has been a glorious liberator, but it has been a mighty slave-hunter and executioner as well. In most of the great conflicts of history, the spirit of life has fought on both sides. It could win only by conquering the spirit of life, and it could be beaten only by being defeated by the spirit of life.

It is possible, of course, to take it for granted that the spirit of life is always predominantly

on the side with which one sympathizes. As children, many of us regarded every triumph of the Israelites over the Jebusites, the Hittites, and the Ammonites as a triumph of the spirit of life, though we never spoke of it in those particular terms. Believing that they stood for life and light as the chosen people of God, we had no great objection to their smiting a number of idolatrous Jebusites hip and thigh. We never paused to consider whether the Philistines might be a decent, hard-working people asking only for a place in the sun. Samson was the incarnation of the spirit of life as he slew them with the jaw-bone of an ass. There is no evidence that Samson was a more virtuous or more gracious-mannered man than Goliath, but Goliath had not the spirit of life in him, and we rejoiced when David felled the lifeless giant with a pebble from his sling. This, however, was a matter in which it was easy to be sure which was the right side. We knew this on the best authority, and for us the enemies of the Hebrews, from the magnificently energetic Egyptians onwards, were the enemies of the spirit of life.

As regards secular history, on the other hand, it was not so easy to be quite certain on which side the spirit of life was fighting. We might,

of course, have decided that the side that won was always the side on which the spirit of life had been fighting, but, in order to do so, we should have had to believe that the spirit of life was non-moral, and was as ready to assist in crushing freedom as in achieving it. The spirit of life, we should have had to admit, had built all the great empires and the great tyrannies, had founded great industries on the servitude of women and children, and had exploited the bodies and souls of helpless savages for gain. We revolt from this conception in our early years, however, and do not feel that we are denying the spirit of life when we take sides with Hannibal against the Romans or with Pompey against Julius Caesar. From Hector onwards, our heroes are to be found as often among the defeated as among the victorious. The defeat of these heroes has meant to our imaginations the defeat of what is best in life by what is worst.

Hence we cannot celebrate the spirit of life either as something that is invariably noble or as something that invariably triumphs. We are forced to admit that it is both good and evil—that in fact it is the creator of most of the miseries as well as of most of the gran-

deurs in human history. Certainly, in Nature, the spirit of life seems extraordinarily indifferent in its distribution of good and evil. It is the spirit of life that gives the small birds courage to unite in mobbing a twilight owl, and it is the spirit of life that gives the hawk the swiftness and keenness of sight that enable it to pounce on its prey. The dog, filled with the spirit of life, pursues the cat; the cat, filled with the spirit of life, pursues the bird; the bird, filled with the spirit of life, pursues the insect. The spirit of life is impartial as between the lion and the lamb. It gives the lion strength that makes him dangerous and so leads to the destruction of his species: it gives the lamb timidity and serviceableness that lead to the preservation of its species. Yet no one could say that the spirit of life is more manifest in the lamb than in the lion. The truth is, it is the lion and the eagle and such creatures of prey, rather than the gentle creatures who live for our use, that have won the admiration of man as symbols of the spirit of life. It is the courageous fighting animal that most delights the imagination. It was love of the spirit of life in the game-cock that was the chief cause of the popularity of cock-fighting. It was the same love of the spirit of life, I imagine, more

than delight in cruelty, that first taught men to take pleasure in the bull-ring.

Among human animals, as among their dumb fellow-creatures, we also single out the courageous fighter for our devotion. If he is a courageous fighter, we admire him, even if he is an enemy or if he is fighting for a cause which we believe to be unjust. In fiction—in fiction, perhaps, considerably more than in life—we can scarcely refuse admiration to a scoundrel if he is superlatively courageous. I cannot see, however, how this love of the spirit of life is to help us in our politics. If we had been living in the time of the French Revolution, we should have found ourselves hard put to it to tell on a spirit-of-life theory which side to take at the various crises. Should we have thought there was more spirit of life in the Girondins or in those who executed them, in Danton or in those who executed him, in Robespierre or in those who executed him? Was Marat or Charlotte Corday the truer representative of the spirit of life? Was Napoleon the incarnation of the spirit of life in the days of his triumphs, and had the spirit of life transferred itself to Wellington by the time of Waterloo?

I think we have to be sure of our answers

to such questions as these before we commit ourselves to idealizing the spirit of life as a necessarily good and beautiful thing. There is scarcely an aggressive movement in Europe to-day that does not feel that it represents the spirit of life that nothing can keep down. The Italians sing *Giovanezza* as though it were the hymn of a nation in resurrection. No poet ever felt more exalted by the revival of the world in April than the German feels as he hears of the rearmament of his country. The spirit of life, indeed, has been abroad from the Shannon to the Ural Mountains, and no one knows what will come of all this if it is allowed to continue, unchecked by the consideration that the spirit of life is the common possession of all peoples, of all causes, of all classes, and of all human beings.

When once any country or any class begins to believe that it is the sole depository of the spirit of life, it is ten to one that the spirit of life will become self-centred and ruthless. The Nazis, refusing to acknowledge that the German Jews, too, possessed the spirit of life, used rubber truncheons on them and treated them as outcasts in the country of their birth. The Fascists, denying that the spirit of life existed in Communists and Liberals, treated some of

them to castor-oil and some of them to exile. The Bolsheviks, again, dealt with the *bourgeois* as with people in whom the spirit of life could not be detected with a microscope. And who can be sure that if, in any of the great conflicts in modern Europe, matters had been reversed and the other side had won, the vanquished would have been any better treated by the victors? Would a triumphant White Russia have been merciful to the Reds? Would a Communist Italy or Germany, elated by victory, have taken for its motto: 'Pardon's the word for all,' and invited Fascists and Nazis to share freely in the common brotherhood of man? It is difficult to believe so. Most political enthusiasts are tempted to see in their opponents, not equal possessors of the spirit of life, but the party of decadence and death.

Hence, I am not sure that what Europe is suffering from most is not an excessive consciousness of the spirit of life in the various nations. It is a spirit rich in courage and self-sacrifice, and therefore beautiful: it is a spirit rich in hate and mercilessness, and therefore hideous. It seems to me that life is pleasanter, not only for oneself, but for other people, when there is a little less of the spirit of life about.

It is the glory of the individual, but it is often the curse of nations. After all, the spirit of life is seen in the earthquake as well as in the green field. One cannot trust it unrestrained as a guide out of world-chaos.



PLEASING THE FOREIGNER

I DOUBT whether there has ever been a time in the history of the world at which foreigners were so popular as they are to-day. We have lost much of that savage instinct that regards a stranger as a sinister-looking fellow and a potential enemy. I am sure that much of the persecution of the Jews was due to the fact that they kept their racial characteristics and in most of the countries in which they lived had a foreign look. To-day, however, the attitude to the foreigner is changing. Over most of the world men are saying to each other: 'The foreigner is a good man. He has money, and, if we are nice to him, he may come and spend it among us.' This is the result of the enormous increase in travel. Everybody who has saved twenty pounds is a traveller nowadays, and, if

he has a little more, he will find himself tempted by the advertisements to go and see how much he is beloved at the Taj Mahal, on the South African veldt, and in the ports of the South Sea Islands. Even countries in a state of revolution do their best to persuade the foreigner that, though the natives may hate each other to the point of throwing bombs, no foreigner will ever be hit except by accident. I have sometimes wondered why revolutionary countries do not go farther than this and offer foreign visitors special cheap fares to the scene of revolution. I am sure that thousands of people would rush to buy tickets for a specially conducted tour through a revolutionary area.

We have evidence of the growing love of foreigners in the way in which even Soviet Russia and Hitlerite Germany go out of their way to invite foreign visitors to their shores. They may hate foreign ideas as most other countries hate foreign goods; but they are human enough to love foreign money and foreign good will. Where it is a question of getting hold of a foreigner's money, there is neither East nor West, border nor breed nor birth. Money is the great leveller: it makes all—or nearly all—men equally welcome. I have a Communist friend who is greeted as enthusiastically in the

more expensive hotels of Rome and Venice as if he were one of Mussolini's ministers. Even in so politically minded a country as Ireland, the hotel-keepers make no distinctions on the score of politics among their guests. In Scotland, a Wee Free hotel proprietor will let his best bedroom as readily to a rich atheist as to a poor-looking Christian. Thus the love of money, which is commonly supposed to make men narrow and miserly, appears really to broaden the mind as few other things can. Prejudice disappears in a misty glow of universal benevolence. The catering sections of the community, indeed, have gone far beyond the statesmen in putting into practice that universal good will which to many people seems a Utopian dream. In the hotels and restaurants, more than anywhere else, all men are equal—if they have money in their pockets.

Japan, I see, is the latest country to join in the Love-the-Foreigner Movement. Japan—like most of the Far East, indeed—was once supposed to be hostile to foreigners. I do not know whether the Japanese ever spoke of their guests as 'foreign devils' as the Chinese did; but for a time they seemed to regard them as intruders rather than as blood-brothers from across the sea. Now that is all to be changed.

The foreigner is to be smiled on and made to enjoy himself, and everything is to be done to please him. A booklet of etiquette, entitled *How to Behave before Foreigners*, has been published by the Japanese Board of Tourist Industry, telling the women and girls employed in hotels, restaurants, and places of amusement how to behave in such a way as not to offend the susceptibilities of foreign visitors. The first rule is: 'Do not whisper among yourselves or titter in the presence of foreign visitors.' That is a good rule. There are few things more embarrassing in a restaurant than to find oneself being stared at and tittered about by two whispering waitresses. One realizes that they must have their fun like other people, but one hates to think that they may be making fun of oneself and even calling one offensive nicknames, such as 'Elephant's Ears,' 'Cock Robin,' or 'Old Seed-Cake.' I have heard waitresses referring to their customers by names like these, and I never went back to the restaurant again, fearing the name they might have invented for me. There is one restaurant, however, where I do not mind being called after the dish I have ordered. In this restaurant, if your food takes a long time in coming, the manageress looks over at you sympathetically and calls out to

a waitress: 'There's a kidney-on-toast has been waiting over there in the corner for twenty minutes. It's perfectly disgraceful.' To her you are a kidney-on-toast till you have been served. But she is serious and friendly about it and does not deride you to the other waitresses as 'Kidney-on-Toast' after you have gone. Tomorrow she will know you as 'Sausage-and-Mash' or 'Haddock-and-Poached' or 'Two-Fried-and-a-Back,' according to your order; but it will all be done without a foolish and disturbing accompaniment of cachinnation, and, as a result, the customers of this lunch-house are among the most loyal in London.

The second rule to be observed by Japanese waitresses in the presence of foreigners is: 'Don't imitate fancy gestures learned at the cinema, which will only excite disgust on the part of foreigners.' I am not so sure about the virtue of this rule. Would it be so great a hardship, I wonder, to be waited on by an exact replica of Greta Garbo or Marlene Dietrich? It is true that it would be rather embarrassing, as one was drinking a cup of tea, to find a waitress gesticulating like a Spanish gipsy and dancing round the table with a red flower in her mouth. But there is a sympathetic quality in the fancy gestures of great film actresses that is far from

disgusting and that, if it were adopted by the waitresses in a restaurant, might well lead to an increase of customers. The third rule in the etiquette-book is sounder. It is: 'Don't ask a foreigner's age unless it is absolutely required.' It will be a bad day for the Savoy when a waiter is allowed, after taking a dowager's order, to say to her: 'Excuse me, madam, but I should very much like to know how old you are.' Apparently, in Japan this is a hobby, as it is among children in this part of the world. But, if you look into *Who's Who*, you will find that there are a considerable number of people who do not like to tell their ages. If it were made compulsory, before being served with a meal in a restaurant, to answer the question: 'How old are you?' many of the best people would take to dining at home.

There is sound advice, again, in the rule: 'Light pranks add zest to your service, but don't pull people's ears.' I am not sure, indeed, that the rule goes far enough. It seems to me that a waitress should take a good look at her customers before indulging even in light pranks with them. If Bishop Proudie had visited Japan, I am certain that both he and Mrs. Proudie would have been greatly disturbed if a waitress in their hotel had begun

to show an inclination to light pranks at the dinner-table. Certainly, if in an access of high spirits, the waitress had pulled the bishop's ears, Mrs. Proudie, if not the bishop, would have risen indignantly from the table. It would be equally inept to take a tug at the whiskers of a Nonconformist minister. Similarly, a prosperous and pompous business-man has a dignity to preserve in public. Ear-pulling, no doubt, is well meant, but it is confusing to a sober man in the full glare of a restaurant.

Heaven knows, the European is not a particularly sensitive man; but it is clear that his modesty would be greatly shocked if Japanese womanhood behaved to him as it is forbidden in the etiquette-book to behave. The prospective English visitor to Japan will learn with considerable relief that the women employed in hotels are now warned: 'Don't go into the bathroom when foreigners are bathing to ask whether the temperature of the water is right or to help them wash themselves.' This rule is a proof of the immense thoughtfulness of the Japanese, who realize that, if an Englishman's home is his castle, his bathroom is the most inviolable stronghold in his castle. It has long been a rule of English life that the Englishman in his bathroom should be heard and not

seen. Being an individualist, a solitary creature, he is never so happy as when he has locked himself safely alone in his bathroom, where his joy can be measured by the intensity of his splashing and of his song. To break in on his solitude at such a moment in order to inquire about the temperature of the bath water would be to rouse in him the fury of the outraged lion. I have never heard an Englishman give vent to such a strangled yell of horror mixed with rage as when he had forgotten to lock the bathroom door and a housemaid burst in on him unawares.

Now that Japan has gone out of its way to make things pleasant for foreigners, it is to be hoped that England will follow suit. For the sake of foreigners, if not of themselves, Englishmen should at least aim at establishing all over the country hotels fit for a foreigner to stay at, with good food and no extortion in the wine-list. They might even keep at least some of the public-houses open all day and so encourage the spirit of international amity. A nation is largely judged by its attitude to foreigners, and England should not lag behind in the great cause of appealing at once to the heart and to the pocket of the visitor from abroad.



THE PLEASURES OF DILATORINESS

OUR grandfathers would have been incredulous if they had been told that a time would soon come when men would feel aggrieved at being forbidden to drive through the streets at a faster rate than a mile in two minutes. A mile in two minutes seemed quite good going to them. It is true that a galloping race-horse can go faster than that. A record-breaking horse ran a mile and a quarter in two minutes at Newmarket. At Epsom, when Windsor Lad won the Derby, he covered a mile and a half in two minutes and thirty-six seconds. It will be seen from this that galloping race-horses on great occasions can run at the rate of over thirty-five miles an hour. But our grandfathers would have been astonished if it had been suggested that people ought to be allowed to drive through the streets at the speed of race-horses. We have changed our point of view. To-day many people, if they were travelling at the pace of a Derby winner, would feel that they were crawling.

For myself, I like crawling. When the roads were still empty of machinery, there was nothing

pleasanter than to sit in a red-and-blue country cart and jolt along the uneven road at the pace of a cow returning to the byre. The day seemed twice as long when one passed over the miles so slowly. The very clocks seemed to tick in a more leisurely time in that era. One did not see much of the world in a day, but the eye could linger on what one saw—the farmyard with its row of elms, the turkey-cock gobbling on the manure-heap, the goat destroying the hedges with its teeth, the sandy cornfield eaten up by rabbits, the blue river moving slowly under the sun to the sea, the barefooted children going home from school, the yellow-hammer in the thorn, the field of clover, old men standing outside their cottages and watching the world go by, the ragged and ramshackle tramp on his rounds.

Even if we drove, not behind a cart-horse, but behind a trotting pony, the world was extraordinarily visible. The features of everybody one met were clear as in a picture. The women thinning turnips in the fields, the blacksmith driving the nails into the horse's hoof, the sluice above the mill-wheel, the church with its peaceful gravestones, the blind woman in the flower-garden—one was still travelling slowly enough to take in the scene in detail. Will

any one ever drive through such a dilatory world again?

If the inventors could have foreseen what they were about to destroy with their inventions, surely they would have hesitated before yielding to their genius. For the country, to be enjoyed fully, must, like good poetry, or indeed good prose, be taken slowly, and it is one of the worst achievements of the inventors of speed-machines that they have taught us to 'skip.' There are men who boast of the number of miles they have travelled: this seems to me as foolish as it would be if some one, having read skipingly half the world's masterpieces, boasted of the number of books he had read. No one can really read a book unless he knows how to go slow. To read Donne skipingly is scarcely to have read him at all, and to travel through a landscape skipingly is almost the same thing as not to have visited it. I remember in Scotland hearing a party of people from Lancashire complaining bitterly of the speed at which they had been whirled past the scenery by the driver of their charabanc. One of them was telling a stranger: 'I said to the driver, "Look here, we came up here to look at the scenery, but every time the hand of that speedometer moves up near forty, my wife can

look at nothing but the speedometer. You're simply spoiling our holiday and frightening the women. Besides, who do you think would come all the way to Scotland from Blackburn simply to see lakes and mountains flashing past him like pfft!''' And he made a quick whistling noise and flicked his fingers to express his notion of a countryside made invisible through insane speed. Obviously, the Lancashire man was right. The chauffeur drove under the illusion that the purpose of a fast-moving machine is to enable the traveller to arrive at his destination as quickly as possible, whereas to a man who is enjoying himself the arrival is often the least important point of the journey. To get to a destination quickly is all very well for a business man, but the man who wants to be happy must learn to dawdle.

This will probably be realized more generally as time goes on. Speed is still something of a novelty, and, while it remains a novelty, it is bound to be in the fashion. We can scarcely blame human beings for losing their heads a little on discovering that by the slight pressure of a foot they could whirl themselves along faster than horses can run or swallows fly. Who is there whose spirits have not risen with the rise of the speedometer? There is a

reckless joy in letting one's car go all out and make full use of its talents. A ride becomes a race—a race to overtake one's own past achievement, perhaps—and is as exciting as a chariot race in the Roman arena. One has a flattering sense, too, of personal power as one speeds along the road, and most of us would admit, I imagine, that we have obtained a far finer exaltation of the spirit from our own fast driving than from the driving of others. I myself have never driven a fast car, but, when I began to drive, even I could achieve this exaltation of the spirit when the hand of the speedometer passed fifty. Almost a crawling pace, you may think, but it did not seem so to a novice.

I foresee the time, however, when human beings, having ceased to regard speed as a novelty, will lose much of their taste for it. They will still enjoy it in races, for the passion of racing can never die; but, reading about the leisurely lives of their ancestors, they will begin to envy them and try to recover the ancient leisureliness. If they buy an aeroplane, they will be more particular about the aeroplane's being able to go slow than about its being able to go fast. In those days an inventor will make his fortune by giving the world an aeroplane

that can dawdle and hover, so that the passenger can see almost as much of the country and of cities as if he were on foot. Similarly, the most popular motor car of the era will be a car that can crawl along silently at three miles an hour in top gear. I do not suggest that speed will disappear entirely from travel. But it will be used chiefly for business ends. The luxury of dawdling will have become all but universal, and indolent motor cars will fit in with the countryside and its atmosphere of ancient peace.

At present, it must be admitted, the slow driver is not popular, but this is largely because instead of hugging the side of the road he so often drives on the crown. It is his selfishness rather than his slowness that is hateful. At the same time, he is undoubtedly hated by all who believe that it is enormously important to speed up the traffic, and I believe that there are even places in America where it is an offence against the law to drive at under thirty miles an hour. In England, since the introduction of the thirty-mile speed limit in built-up areas many motorists have complained bitterly of others who impeded them by driving at twenty or twenty-five miles an hour. Before blaming the slow motorists for selfishness,

however, it would be well to be sure that their speedometers registered the mileage correctly. It is said that a good many cars on the roads are cars which have been fitted with lying speedometers that flatter the driver into believing that he is driving faster than he is. Where no speed limit exists, this is very pleasant for the driver, but when once a speed limit is imposed, it merely compels him to drive more slowly than anybody else.

Let not the fast drivers, however, become over-exasperated by the slow progress of others in the built-up areas. They have still the greater part of England as their playground. The countryside is theirs for the taking. During the next year or two, I am sure, motorists will love the country as they never loved it before. They will have a new appreciation of rural delights when nightingales and wild roses become associated with the right to 'do sixty.' The song of the engine and the song of the lark will blend into a music sweeter than the song of either, and the motorist will learn to look on London as a slow-going and lethargic place when he finds how life pulses in the lanes of Somerset. This may end in the flight of lovers of a peaceful and quiet life to the towns where everything moves at an old-fashioned pace through the

streets. For the era of universal appreciation of slowness we shall have to wait some time longer. But it must surely come. Men naturally enjoy seeing the world, and they cannot do this if they see too much of it at too fast a pace.

ARGUING

IF there is one thing for which I honour the human race more than for another, it is the way in which it goes on arguing. A visitor from another planet, landing on earth, would be amazed at the extent to which controversy flourishes everywhere except in those ultra-modern countries in which it is forbidden. He would say to himself: 'Why do these people argue so hotly? Those who argue were not converted to their beliefs by reason, so why should they hope to convert others by arguments that would not have convinced themselves? The human being seems to be a person who jumps mystically to conclusions, yet who never loses hope of being able to reason others into the same conclusions.' The fact that, in spite of the obvious truth of this, men go on arguing, is a proof of the unquenchable optimism of the human race.

Consider for a moment. You who are middle-aged must have taken part in thousands of arguments. You argued in the nursery and you won, though your nurse did not admit it.

You argued with uncles and aunts, with great-uncles and great-aunts, and thrashed them all without making the slightest impression on them. You argued triumphantly at school without ever converting a schoolfellow. Later, your college rang with your incontrovertible statements on matters religious, political, literary, and metaphysical; and not a single contemporary of the opposite opinion even knew that you had won. In the wide world you continued to fight for the truth like a skilled fencer—in your and other people's homes, in offices, in restaurants, in the streets, perhaps in public-houses. You have been arguing, say, for forty years, and how many converts have you made? You will be lucky, I think, if you can name three.

I do not mean to make the absurd suggestion that people never change their opinions. I doubt, however, whether they often change them in consequence of an argument. I myself became a Socialist in my teens, but I was no more reasoned into it than into smoking. The thing simply happened without my knowing how or why it had happened. Yet no sooner was I mystically converted to a belief in Socialism than I began to badger all my friends and acquaintances with arguments that, sound as they were, I should have laughed at a month

or two before. In vain did they try not to listen or to turn the subject. To me they were brands to be plucked from the burning by controversy. I plucked my hardest, but how merrily they all continued to burn!

My conversion to Nationalism was more rational, but, even so, it was not the result of other people's arguments. I had come to England from the north of Ireland, believing in my simplicity that the English spent their days and nights thinking out plans for the welfare of Ireland—for improving the land system and the education system, and for draining the regions of the Bann and the Barrow. To my surprise, I found that the English were a very practical people who had enough problems of their own to solve without spending sleepless nights over the drainage of the Bann. Most of them seemed to look on the Irish as a pampered people living largely at the expense of the English taxpayer. Finding that they regarded Ireland mainly as a nuisance, I concluded in the course of a few months that it would be better for the country to be governed by people who were, at least, interested in it. That, however, was the beginning, not the end, of my conversion. The conversion became complete only on the day on which I went to

see Synge's *Riders to the Sea* at the Royalty Theatre. That, again, was a mystical experience, but, none the less, I immediately set out to try to convert everybody I knew to my opinion by process of argument. My arguments, I may say without vanity, were so convincing that they would have got through the hide of a pachyderm, but they never got through the hides of my friends. The human being is all but argument-proof.

This is obvious if you consider the results of all the public debates that have been held since the beginning of time. Take, for example, the debates in the House of Commons. Were Disraeli's supporters ever known to throw in the towel because Gladstone had felled him with an unanswerable argument? What would Mr. Baldwin's followers think, except that he was mad, if he suddenly got up and announced that Mr. Attlee had defeated him in argument and that henceforth he would take his place as a private soldier in the ranks of the Labour Party? Ever since the days of Demosthenes and Aeschines, it has been taken for granted that no eminent man is ever converted by an opponent by process of debate. Even in those old-fashioned debates which used to be held between humble Atheists and humble

Christians, the leading Christian and the leading Atheist always went home with their opinions unchanged. In view of this, I have sometimes wondered whether it would not be a good thing to have referees at debates, as at football matches and at boxing matches, who would decide when one side had scored or when one of the opponents had received a knock-out blow. At present, each side is left to believe that it has scored a smashing victory. I should like to see the loser, not only publicly declared to be the loser, but compelled to go over to the other side.

It may be urged, however, that public debates achieve their object, not by the conversion of the leaders on either side but by the conversion of their more open-minded followers. Among people of real convictions, these open-minded followers are known as wobblers; and a wobbler who has yielded to argument is known to the party he has left as a turncoat. How suspicious people are of a politician who has listened to reason and so deserted their party for another! Yet, if we believe in controversy, we should honour the wobbler and the turncoat above all others. These are the men who put reason above prejudice, and have the honesty to admit that they have been beaten by arguments better

than their own. They are men who are not afraid of their own past, and are glad to feel that what they say in 1936 is different from the nonsense they talked in 1913. Their opponents do not feel like this, however. They say, 'Just for a handful of silver he left us,' or something of that kind. They say it sometimes with truth, but, whether it is true or not, they say it.

Considering the number of wobblers there are in the world, it is perhaps not surprising that we go on arguing as we do in parliaments and on platforms. A large audience will probably contain at least one or two reasonable men. What particularly astonishes me, however, is that we go on arguing just as hotly in private life—arguing with people who have not the remotest resemblance to reasonable men—people who would not show the faintest sign of wobbling if Socrates and St. Thomas Aquinas made a combined and overwhelming assault on them. Again and again I find myself arguing passionately with men who are not open to argument and whom I know I could no more convert by argument than I could turn a stone into butter. They are men, I tell myself, so steeped in illusion that they can believe almost anything so long as it is not quite true. Yet

I go on trying, vainly, to outshout them, and to blow down the flag of illusion with a mighty wind of argument. In cold blood I realize that this is very foolish—that, for all the effect my arguments produce, I might as well be the street-evangelist whom I once saw preaching salvation with no audience but a lamp-post.

No doubt they feel much the same about me. I, too, am not exactly open to argument—at least, not to the only sort of arguments other people seem to be able to think of. Yet who that is of an argumentative disposition has ever given up hope? To the genuinely argumentative man every other human being remains a potential convert while alive. I have known enthusiastic youths who would spend a whole evening trying to convert an octogenarian miser to the moral beauty of Socialism. I have heard a Free Trader in a public-house fanatically expounding the case for Free Trade to a tipsy bookmaker who could scarcely pronounce the word 'whisky.' We are all born canvassers for our causes, and are all the more deserving of admiration because we go on canvassing without ever turning a vote.

Is controversy entirely useless, then? I do not think so. For one thing, it clears the controversialist's mind and so enables him gradu-

ally to become a more lucid exponent of his creed. For another thing, it keeps ideas in the air; and it is by these ideas, not by immediate arguments, that men in the end are mystically converted, or, if you prefer the word, infected. Finally, controversy is a very good sport. It is because it is a good sport that I wish a referee had been present in my house on Sunday night to decide who won in the great welter-weight argument between Paddy Freeman and Al Comunismo.



NICE BEHAVIOUR

It is now some thousands — perhaps, some hundreds of thousands — of years since the human race set about improving its morals and manners. For this purpose it invented a system of taboos; and, though the taboos of the civilized man differ from the taboos of the savage, they are no less strict and are even more numerous. The white races are as grossly taboo-ridden as any swamp-dwelling tribe in Africa.

Even in our social life, where we should be freest from restrictions, we live in a veritable concentration-camp of taboos. Consider, for example, the case of the man who accepts an invitation to a dinner-party. On his arrival at the party, he is forbidden, save in exceptional circumstances, to proffer his left hand to his

hostess. A few minutes later he finds himself forbidden to sit down at the table before the women-guests have done so. He is forbidden to use his napkin or the mass of knives, forks, and spoons that he sees before him except according to an established ritual. And so it goes on till the port is circulating, when he finds that he is forbidden to pass the decanter anti-clockwise.

Much as I had meditated on the slavery of social life, however, I had never realized how vast is the number of dinner-table taboos till I read lately an American book of etiquette, *Manners for Millions*. This book, written by Miss Sophie C. Hadida, exposes the servitude of the civilized diner-out as it has never been exposed before. There is not a moment of the meal at which he is not checked by some prohibition or other. For instance, if he is offered a second helping of some dish and does not want it, Miss Hadida will allow him to say 'No, thank you,' but absolutely forbids him to say: 'No, thank you, I 'm full up,' or 'I should say not; I 'm stuffed,' or 'I 'm full up to the neck,' or 'I 'm not able to move now,' or 'I 'm so uncomfortable, I can't budge.' Strange that so freedom-loving a people as the Americans should meekly endure this censorship

of honest and vivid speech! These prohibitions can serve only to destroy the ease and naturalness of table-talk. Even if you dislike some dish that is offered you, and wish to explain your reasons for refusing it, Miss Hadida forbids you to do this. Once again you must limit yourself to a 'No, thank you,' and are forbidden to use such honest expressions as: 'I love *it*, but *it* doesn't love me,' 'It makes me sick,' 'It bloats my stummick,' 'It creates gas,' 'It makes my skin break out,' 'Doctor says I mustn't eat it, it gives me acne,' 'It causes regurgitation,' or even, 'I can't eat it, it hurts my tooth.' Under all these prohibitions, the lot of a dyspeptic guest at an American dinner-party must be one of considerable misery. Being forbidden to say the very things he most wants to say, he must often, I imagine, be reduced in the end to a glum and venomous silence.

Even the healthiest guest, however, is bound hand and foot—as well as tongue—by the oppressive laws of etiquette. He, no less than the dyspeptic, is subject to the iron commandment: 'Never blow food to cool it.' His robustness makes it all the more inexcusable for him to disobey the rule: 'If any food that is too hot finds its way to the mouth, do not remove it. Take a swallow of water.' His

heartiness will not enable him to carry off lightly breaches of the two killjoy laws: 'Never offer to any one a taste of food from your own fork or spoon,' and 'Never ask for anything from another's plate.' The rules are adamant. The land of the Medes and the Persians was



NEVER WIPE MORE THAN THE LIPS WITH THE NAPKIN

Liberty Hall compared with a modern American home on the night of a dinner-party. Even in England the guest is not supposed to misuse his napkin—by tucking it under his chin, for instance. But in America, the napkin prohibitions go far beyond this. There, according to Miss Hadida, the rule of the best people is: 'Never wipe more than the lips with the napkin. It is not for the cheeks, perspiration, or the

nose.' This seems to me to be as serious an infringement of individual liberty as those other prohibitions: 'Never talk to any one with a toothpick in your mouth' and 'Never lick the fingers, no matter how sticky they be.'

Even in America, however, a certain latitude seems to be allowed to the new-comer in society. Miss Hadida speaks with genuine sympathy of the guest who is in the embarrassing position of having to deal with some unfamiliar dish. She counsels him:

Should there be served a dish that is unfamiliar to you, just watch out of the corner of your eye to see what the hostess does, and do the same. If you are awkward at managing the unusual food, it is better to laugh off your awkwardness and say to your neighbour: 'Gracious! I seem to be having a hard time.'

More than once I myself have been in this sad predicament. Would that I had been versed in the writings of Miss Hadida at the time, so that I might have known the appropriate comment to make to the accompaniment of a hollow laugh that would have put myself and my neighbour at our ease!

Laughter, indeed, is recommended by Miss Hadida as the way out of more than one difficult situation at the dinner-table. There is, for example, the situation of the guest who finds

himself using the wrong fork or spoon. Miss Hadida's advice to him—or her—is:

If an error occurs, and you prefer to carry it off with a laugh, say something like this: 'Oh, dear, I ought to carry a book of etiquette with me!' or 'Par DAW, my error!' or 'Social error 50 for me!' or 'Well, I must be in love,' or any other remark that seems to be suitable to the group present. This is just quietly said, as though you wished only the person next to you to hear and smile with you. A laugh follows and every one is put at ease.

There are some situations, however, in which laughter is an offence. Take the case of a woman who will 'accept an introduction when she knows the person introduced and then laugh at the introducer for the pains she has taken to introduce two persons to each other who were already acquainted.' Miss Hadida gives us the situation in dialogue form:

Mary, have you met Mrs. Morro?

Mary. [*Gushingly.*] How DO you DO, Mrs. Morro?

[*Then also from Mary.*] Ha! Ha! Ha! Why I knew Mrs. Morro before you were born.

It must be admitted that Mary does not show up well on this occasion.

American etiquette, however, is not confined to parties and such festive occasions. It spreads its rules into every corner of the national life

—the church, the theatre, the bathroom, and the office. There is scarcely an hour of the day at which Miss Hadida does not pursue her fellow-countrymen and fellow-countrywomen with rules—and excellent rules—of conduct. I know no book in which the ten commandments relating to chewing-gum are more clearly and incisively formulated. Miss Hadida regards the chewing of gum as a 'plebeian habit,' but even so, she sees that there is a right way and a wrong way of chewing. As a guide to the right way, she has drawn up a series of admonitions, among them being:

Never make a noise (smacking, snapping) as you chew.

Never pull the gum out in long strings.

Never park your gum in any place that another is likely, or obliged, to touch with his fingers.

Never give chewing-gum to any one—even to a child—if you have chewed it.

Never take gum from another person's mouth.

Never throw gum where another may step on it and carry it home attached to his shoe.

As the habit of chewing is spreading in England, it is to be hoped that these wise words will be pondered here as well as in America. Why should the B.B.C. not broadcast them some evening to a nation that, as regards the

etiquette and ethics of chewing, is still in its infancy ?

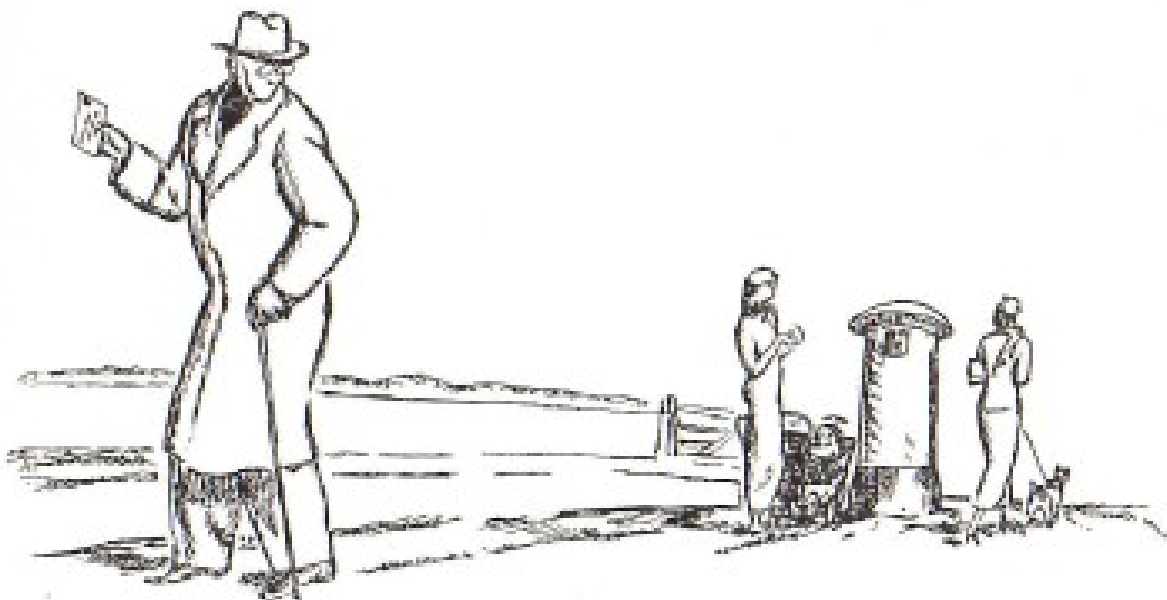
English readers, indeed, might learn much to their advantage from the pages of this book. It is not only in America, but in England, that the younger generation would do well to take to heart Miss Hadida's advice on the subject of profanity :

Eliminate such profane words as 'damn' and 'hell' from your vocabulary. They do not add charm to your personality. Though your friends may laugh, they do not admire your choice of words. There is great danger in using such language, because there are many persons who strongly object to it—your minister, perhaps, or the Sunday school teacher.

I think Miss Hadida does less than justice to the minister by introducing the word 'perhaps' ; but, apart from this, her advice is perfectly sound.

At the same time, the question remains whether the human race will, or ought to, continue for ever in servitude to these endless and innumerable prohibitions. Many of us acquiesce in them simply because we forget that, in our ordinary behaviour, we are living in obedience to tyrannous conventions. A few choice spirits rebel and use napkins and knives and forks as they please, whistle in the streets,

laugh openly at the hostess who introduces them to somebody whom they already know, ask for food off other people's plates, give chewing-gum from their mouths to children, and say 'damn' and 'hell,' without any regard for the feelings of the minister. But the mass of us lounge contentedly in our chains. We accept the tyranny of convention as we accept the tyranny of DORA. The truth is, we are still taboo-ridden savages at heart. There are some who say that it is just as well.



FORGETTING

A LIST of articles lost by railway travellers and now on sale at a great London station has been published, and many people who read it have been astonished at the absent-mindedness of their fellows. If statistical records were available on the subject, however, I doubt whether it would be found that absent-mindedness is common. It is the efficiency rather than the inefficiency of human memory that compels my wonder. Modern man remembers even telephone numbers. He remembers the addresses of his friends. He remembers the dates of good vintages. He remembers appointments for lunch and dinner. His memory is crowded with the names of actors and actresses and cricketers and footballers and murderers. He can tell you what the weather was like in a long-past August, and the name of the provincial

hotel at which he had a vile meal during the summer. In his ordinary life, again, he remembers almost everything that he is expected to remember. How many men in all London forget a single item of their clothing when dressing in the morning? Not one in a hundred. Perhaps not one in ten thousand. How many of them forget to shut the front door when leaving the house? Scarcely more. And so it goes on through the day, almost everybody remembering to do the right thing at the right moment till it is time to go to bed, and then the ordinary man seldom forgets to turn off the lights before going upstairs.

There are, it must be admitted, some matters in regard to which the memory works with less than its usual perfection. It is only a very methodical man, I imagine, who can always remember to take the medicine his doctor has prescribed for him. This is the more surprising because medicine should be one of the easiest things to remember. As a rule, it is supposed to be taken before, during, or after meals, and the meal itself should be a reminder of it. The fact remains, however, that few but the moral giants remember to take their medicine regularly. Certain psychologists tell us that we forget things because we wish to forget them, and it

may be that it is because of their antipathy to pills and potions that many people fail to remember them at the appointed hours. This does not explain, however, how it is that a lifelong devotee of medicines like myself is as forgetful of them as those who take them most unwillingly. The very prospect of a new and widely advertised cure-all delights me. Yet, even if I have the stuff in my pockets, I forget about it as soon as the hour approaches at which I ought to swallow it. Chemists make their fortunes out of the medicines people forget to take.

The commonest form of forgetfulness, I suppose, occurs in the matter of posting letters. So common is it that I am always reluctant to trust a departing visitor to post an important letter. So little do I rely on his memory that I put him on his oath before handing the letter to him. As for myself, any one who asks me to post a letter is a poor judge of character. Even if I carry the letter in my hand I am always past the first pillar-box before I remember that I ought to have posted it. Weary of holding it in my hand, I then put it for safety into one of my pockets and forget all about it. After that, it has an unadventurous life till a long chain of circumstances leads to

a number of embarrassing questions being asked, and I am compelled to produce the evidence of my guilt from my pocket. This, it might be thought, must be due to a lack of interest in other people's letters; but that cannot be the explanation, for I forget to post some even of the few letters that I myself remember to write.

As for leaving articles in trains and in taxis, I am no great delinquent in such matters. I can remember almost anything except books and walking-sticks, and I can often remember even books. Walking-sticks I find it quite impossible to keep. I have an old-fashioned taste for them, and I buy them frequently, but no sooner do I pay a visit to a friend's house or go a journey in a train, than another stick is on its way into the world of the lost. I dare not carry an umbrella for fear of losing it. To go through life without ever having lost an umbrella—has even the grimmest-jawed umbrella-carrier ever achieved this?

Few of us, however, have lost much property on our travels through forgetfulness. The ordinary man arrives at his destination with all his bags and trunks safe. The list of articles lost in trains during the year suggests that it is the young rather than the adult who forget

things, and that sportsmen have worse memories than their ordinary serious-minded fellows. A considerable number of footballs and cricket-bats, for instance, were forgotten. This is easy to understand, for boys, returning from the games, have their imaginations still filled with the vision of the playing-field, and their heads are among the stars—or their hearts in their boots—as they recall their exploits or their errors. They are abstracted from the world outside them. Memories prevent them from remembering to do such small prosaic things as take the ball or the bat with them when they leave the train. For the rest of the day, they are citizens of dreamland. The same may be said, no doubt, of anglers who forget their fishing-rods. Anglers are generally said—I do not know with what justification—to be the most imaginative of men, and the man who is inventing magnificent lies on the journey home after a day's fishing is bound to be a little absent-minded in his behaviour. The fishing-rod of reality is forgotten by him as he day-dreams over the feats of the fishing-rod of Utopia. His loss of memory is really a tribute to the intensity of his enjoyment in thinking about his day's sport. He may forget his fishing-rod, as the poet may forget to post a letter, because

his mind is filled with matter more glorious. Absent-mindedness of this kind seems to me all but a virtue. The absent-minded man is often a man who is making the best of life and therefore has no time to remember the mediocre. Who would have trusted Socrates or Coleridge to post a letter? They had souls above such things.

The question whether the possession of a good memory is altogether desirable has often been discussed, and men with fallible memories have sometimes tried to make out a case for their superiority. A man, they say, who is a perfect remembering machine is seldom a man of the first intelligence, and they quote various cases of children or men who had marvellous memories and who yet had no intellect to speak of. I imagine, however, that on the whole the great writers and the great composers of music have been men with exceptional powers of memory. The poets I have known have had better memories than the stockbrokers I have known. Memory, indeed, is half the substance of their art. On the other hand, statesmen seem to have extraordinarily bad memories. Let two statesmen attempt to recall the same event—what happened, for example, at some Cabinet meeting—and each of them will tell



SHE WHEELED AWAY THE PERAMBULATOR, PICTURING
TO HERSELF HIS TERROR

you that the other's story is so inaccurate that either he has a memory like a sieve or is an audacious perverter of the truth. The frequency with which the facts in the autobiographies and speeches of statesmen are challenged suggests that the world has not yet begun to produce ideal statesmen—men who, like great poets, have the genius of memory and of intellect combined.

At the same time, ordinarily good memory is so common that we regard a man who does not possess it as eccentric. I have heard of a father who, having offered to take the baby out in a perambulator, was tempted by the sunny morning to pause on his journey and slip into a public-house for a glass of beer. Leaving the perambulator outside, he disappeared through the door of the saloon bar. A little later, his wife had to do some shopping which took her past the public-house, where to her horror she discovered her sleeping baby. Indignant at her husband's behaviour, she decided to teach him a lesson. She wheeled away the perambulator, picturing to herself his terror when he would come out and find the baby gone. She arrived home, anticipating with angry relish the white face and quivering lips that would soon appear with the news that the baby

had been stolen. What was her vexation, however, when just before lunch her husband came in smiling cheerfully and asking: 'Well, my dear, what 's for lunch to-day?' having forgotten all about the baby and the fact that he had taken it out with him. How many men below the rank of a philosopher would be capable of such absent-mindedness as this? Most of us, I fear, are born with prosaically efficient memories. If it were not so, the institution of the family could not survive in any great modern city.

FLAT EARTH

THE most persistent modern advocate of the theory that the earth is flat has just died at the age of seventy-three. He seems by all accounts to have been a cleverer man than many of those who believe that the earth is round. He invented among other things a free-wheel bicycle and an automatic weighing-machine, and few of us could do that. According to *The Times*, his belief in the flatness of the earth was hereditary. At the age of twenty, Henry Edgell took an oath to his dying father that he would not only maintain the flatness of the earth but prove it. Faithful to his promise he spent the next fifty-three years of his life looking for the necessary evidence. 'In order to study the night stars,' says *The Times*, 'Edgell never went to bed but slept in a chair. He erected a steel tube in his garden pointing towards the Pole Star, which was visible through it, and he evolved the theory of a flat basin-shaped earth, with the sun moving north and south across it. He contended that the Pole Star was only five thousand miles away and that

the sun was only ten miles in diameter.' Whether he proved any of these things we are not told, but clearly he was a man who did not spare himself in the cause of science.

I imagine that he must have been one of the happiest men of his time. How fortunate is the man who at the age of twenty knows exactly what he wants to do with his life and keeps on doing it, undisappointed, to the end! Many young men of twenty think that they know what they want to do with their lives: they have lofty ambitions—sometimes, ideals—in politics or business, but only a fraction of them remain undisappointed to the end. Some of them fail to achieve their ambitions, and so are disappointed. Others achieve their ambitions, and so are disappointed. I doubt whether successful people are on the whole so unhappy as is sometimes made out, but I fear that few successful people are so happy as Mr. Edgell with his steel tube pointed at the Pole Star. He had aimed at the impossible and so made it certain that he would spend his whole life travelling without ever arriving. He was never to know the disillusion of success.

It may be contended that his life was spent in silliness, but his ends were no sillier than Don Quixote's. He undoubtedly set out to do the

world good—to rescue it from the plight into which it had been thrown by the general acceptance of the round-earth theory. And is there not something to be said for the view that the belief in the rotundity of the earth has done mankind little good? Ever since man has come to believe that he is an inhabitant of a world which is not flat but round, he has been more and more consumed with vanity. He feels no longer that he is a dweller on an insignificant floor of mud, roofed by a sky that supports Heaven, and with an enormous Hell burning in the basement. He sees himself instead as one who is being charioted round the sun on a golden star and wheeled like a monarch through the wide spaces of the universe. One would have imagined that round-earth man would necessarily have been more modest than flat-earth man, since the later theory makes him relatively a mere speck in the scheme of things; but he does not see himself as a speck; he sees himself as a mind enlarged to include the whole universe of the stars. He is not merely the inhabitant but the owner of a larger world, and he has acquired the ownership by his own intellectual effort. After all, the flat-earth man attributed his knowledge not to his own cleverness but to divine revelation.

The immodesty of the round-earthers has taken many strange forms in its time, all of them increasing the egoism natural to man. Never for a moment did the races of men pause to say: 'This is a very pretty planet on which we dwell—a little on the small side perhaps, but admirably suited to being cultivated as a garden. Let us set to work and make it a place of perpetual and universal delight.' Poisoned with knowledge, they came to believe, not in such pleasant prettification, but in progress. They felt that it was beneath the dignity of the inhabitants of a round earth to dream of a Golden Age, and set themselves to use every scientific device for the expression of an egoism worthy of their new place in the universe. They put children in unholy factories, and the premature deaths of the children were treated lightly as incidents in the march of progress. Their chemists invented new instruments for mutual destruction, justifying man's place in the universe by their endeavours. Splendidly self-satisfied, man told himself that every day in every way the world was getting better and better, and looked back pityingly on the time when his ancestors believed that the earth was flat as the Dark Ages.

Humanitarianism struggled gallantly against

this theory of progress, which was justified by many men of remarkable intellect, and attempted to divert the stream of progress from its destructive course. It struggled not without effect, but the egoism of the man of the new age was seldom defeated for long. In our own time it achieved a world war. A little later it achieved a world peace. At present, it is doing its best to achieve the dismemberment of the world to such a point that each member will have an independent existence, a limb cut off from the blood-stream that should flow through the whole.

Was it altogether crazy of Mr. Edgell to conclude that the world had not greatly benefited from the acceptance of the theory that the earth is round, and that men might become saner if they believed the evidence of their eyes and reverted to the ancient theory that the earth was, on the whole, flat?

I am not a dogmatic supporter of Mr. Edgell, but it seems to me that his theory is at least as capable of proof as some of the theories propounded by round-earthers to-day. The Germans, for example, I understand, are round-earthers to a man, and would laugh uproariously at a flat-earthier as an out-of-date crank. I am not sure, however, that a belief in the flatness of the earth is a whit crazier

than a belief in a pure Aryan stock. I fancy that the German, like the flat-earthier, first accepts his theory as true and only afterwards sets out to prove it. Has he ever discovered any evidence in favour of the existence of a pure Aryan stock better than the evidence for the flatness of the earth which Mr. Edgell discovered by pointing his steel tube at the Pole Star? These round-earth theories of race are surely often as fantastic as any primitive myth. Nordic man as a myth is no advance on that race of men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders. There is this difference, however, that, whereas flat-earth man could believe fantastic rubbish about foreigners, round-earth man in his egoism can believe fantastic rubbish about himself.

I must not allow myself to overstate the case for the flat-earthiers, however. The flat-earthier was human and, therefore, fallible. He was neither a saint nor a genius. At the same time, it may be fairly claimed for him that he was incapable of believing in many of the superstitions that are prevalent to-day. He was incapable of believing, for example, that if you destroy or limit the food-supply, everybody will have more to eat. He was incapable of believing that the best way to help trade is to

hinder it. He was incapable of believing that men are freest when you put them in chains. He was incapable of believing that, if you wish to fit men to play their part in the world, the first thing you must do is to cut them off from all knowledge of it. In fine, the flat-earthier was a fairly shrewd fellow. He knew enough, when it rained, to get in out of the wet.

I am afraid, however, that, now that Mr. Edgell has gone, the chance of proving that the earth is flat has become an extremely remote one. Dreamers will toil on at the great task of identifying this or that people with the Lost Ten Tribes. Others will devote their giant industry to proving that everything evil that happens is the work of an international Jewish conspiracy. Others will spend laborious days and nights in discovering by means of the Greek alphabet that some notorious statesman's name more or less accords with the Number of the Beast in Revelation. A few, more humble, will be content to pass their days in the pursuit of new ciphers to prove that Bacon wrote the works of Shakespeare. For some reason or other, however, the flat earth has lost much of its appeal to the modern world. Scarcely anybody any longer, except a few physical geographers, care whether the earth is flat or not.

The ordinary man has become a pessimist in the matter. He tells himself that, when the earth was flat, it was bad, and that, when it became round, it was no better. He suspects that the secret of prosperity lies somewhere else than in the shape of a lump of mud and water. I think he is right, but I envy the convinced flat-earthers all the same. They have at least found the secret of individual happiness. They belong to the same company as Don Quixote and my Uncle Toby.



GOOD NEWS

AN eminent psychologist is reported to have said the other day that 'in the last twenty-five years more has been learned about the workings of the human mind than in the previous two thousand.' This is certainly an age in which good news comes romping in almost by every post. There was never a generation like ours through all history. Alfred Russel Wallace once called the nineteenth century the 'wonderful century.' Compared with the leaps and bounds forward that the twentieth century has made in almost every sphere, however, the efforts of the nineteenth century seem petty, crawling affairs. Have we not perfected the aeroplane, the motor car, the speedboat, wireless? Have we not

discovered relativity and vitamins? And have we not now, after two thousand years of groping in the darkness, at last fixed a searchlight on the workings of the human mind?

In the circumstances it is a little difficult to understand why there are so many pessimists about. Here we are, not the heirs of knowledge so much as the *nouveaux riches* of knowledge beyond the dreams of Dr. Faustus, and yet we go about with long faces as though we had been born into one of the most dreadful ages of history. There are some people whose jaws will drop when they pass through the gates of Paradise: they will not recognize Paradise when they see it. Why is it that no leader of opinion organizes what we nowadays call a crusade to impress upon us the fact of our unprecedented good fortune?

The eminent psychologist has done his best, but I should like to see a great publicist like Lord Beaverbrook proclaiming daily from two million front pages that 'We are the people. In comparison with men like us, our ancestors were ignorant savages. We know more than anybody who ever lived, and we know that we know it. We are the people.' It may be, however, that it is not lack of faith in our own surpassing knowledge that is to

blame for our pessimism. After all, there are more people who know that they know living to-day than in any previous century. Towards the end of the last century a wave of agnosticism swept through the intellectual classes, and it seemed probable that a time was approaching when nobody with a first-class mind who knew



'CERTAINTIES' HAVE OFTEN PROVED DISMAL
DISAPPOINTMENTS

that he knew would be conceivable. There is something in agnosticism, however, that is repugnant, if not to the human mind, to the human temper. The ordinary human being, like the ordinary betting man, is on the lookout for 'certainties.' He knows at the back of his mind that 'certainties' have often proved dismal disappointments both in ordinary life and on the racecourse, but he hides this know-

ledge from himself rather than give up his craving for certainty. Hence, instead of being a generation of agnostics, we have turned out to be a generation of dogmatists as convinced of our own rightness as any flat-earther who ever lived.

Dogmatic theology may have waned, but its place has been taken by dogmatic economics, dogmatic politics, and dogmatic psychology. Who has ever talked with a Communist and failed to realize that this present age is not an age of doubt, but an age of faith? In regard to the way in which he holds his faith, the Communist is simply a Plymouth Brother who has wandered from a conventicle into a 'cell.' He sees everything that is happening in the world with the terrible lucidity of certainty. He knows why everything has happened as it has, because it can all be explained by Karl Marx. I have a great respect for the sincerity of Communists, but I sometimes wish that they would occasionally admit that they, being human, may possibly be wrong. I know that no one can do very much unless he is convinced that he is right, and that in fairly recent times a great political party was wrecked on Mr. Balfour's open mind. At the same time, it is no bad thing for a dogmatist to consider, if

only for a moment, the possibility that he may be mistaken. To do so enables a man who knows that he knows to come to terms with another man who knows that he knows, when both men know entirely opposite things.

And after all, the Fascist also knows that he knows, and knows it with the same certainty as the Communist. The Nazi, too, knows that he knows: at least he knew that he knew till quite recently, though the pressure of events may be making him begin to wonder whether he knew as much as he knew he did. The fact remains, however, that the spread of knowledge—especially of the knowledge of one's own knowledge—has been one of the most conspicuous phenomena of our time. One of the most curious results of this has been that the men who know that they know have done their utmost to prevent other people from knowing anything else. Newspapers are rigorously censored, not only in the matter of opinions, but in the matter of facts. Any fact that seems likely to cast doubt on the omniscience of the man who knows that he knows is suppressed as an enemy of the truth. Churches have been mocked in the past for attempting to conceal the fact that the earth revolves round the sun and that, according to the discoveries of

certain men of science, man has slowly evolved from simpler forms of life. I doubt, however, whether the censorship of facts was ever more rigid under the dogmatic theologians than it is under the dogmatic politicians and economists to-day. In each case, the first consideration has been to prevent the spread of knowledge that might undermine certainty.

I sometimes wonder whether it would not have been better if dogmatism had survived in theology and confined itself to it instead of gradually escaping from it and making itself a home in spheres in which it could do so much damage. It is a very odd thing to see churchmen becoming more and more open-minded, while everybody else is becoming more narrowly minded orthodox. The Church, it seems to me, is one of the few places in which a man has a right to be dogmatic. It claims that its knowledge comes from an infallible super-human source, not from a fallible human source, and, believing this, it should hold its faith dogmatically. In politics, economics, and psychology, however, we know that our knowledge comes from a fallible human source, and that therefore it is possibly as incomplete, and as misleading in its incompleteness, as the knowledge of our fathers. In the exact sciences we can

support our statements with absolute proofs, but in economics or psychology, much as we know, our beliefs must be largely conjectural. I doubt, for example, whether we really know much more about the workings of the human mind than our ancestors did. We have made more and different conjectures about the human mind, and a later generation may scrap them or, at least, modify them beyond recognition. Our knowledge even of that much more easily known thing, the human body, is tragically limited, so that eminent men in Harley Street, who know all that there is to be known about the human body, still make extraordinary mistakes in their treatment of an individual human body.

As for the workings of the human mind, we can invent experimental formulae about them more easily than we can be certain about them. We can know a great deal, but the craze for certainty may easily mislead us into believing that we know far more than we really do know. The more we know about the workings of the human mind, it sometimes seems to me, the less we know about them. What, for example, has been the influence of psychological formulae on biography? It has in many cases merely dressed up great men as formulae and stripped them both of their humanity and their great-

ness. Psychology explains great men till it has almost explained them away. The eminent psychologist whom I have quoted tells us that psychology has abolished God; but the psychological biographers do not even leave us our demigods.

Hence, much as the psychologists know, I should be chary of accepting them as infallible, or all but infallible, guides through the mazes of the human mind. Might not some of their formulae be compared to Belisha beacons set up to assist the traffic in a world of eternal fog? What the world needs most, perhaps, is a little agnosticism to temper the certainties of the secular knowledge of to-day. We may be right or we may be wrong; but it is much more certain that we have theories than that we have knowledge. If Socrates were alive to-day and a student of psychology, I imagine that he would confess to almost as spacious an ignorance as that in which he so modestly gloried more than two thousand years ago.

COLD

THE owl for all his feathers was a-cold. Even so, I envied him his feathers as I lay in bed and thought of the bleak and bitter February morning outside into which I should before long have to go. How pleasant to be so well clad by nature as not to have to get up and dress! The owl has only to make up his mind to go out in order to open his wings and to be off through the window. I, on the other hand, in the same circumstances, am at once reminded that nature has left me inadequately clothed for an English February. As I lie in bed, clad in pyjamas so ridiculous as a protection against cold that if I went out in them I should probably be refused admission to buses as a madman, I have first of all to resolve to leave the comfort of sheets and blankets for the chilly air of the waking world that even a gas-fire can do little to temper. My courage reinforced by a dressing-gown, I have then to hasten down the ice-cold stairs to the bathroom. Here I remove what warmth of beard and whisker nature has grown for me during the last twenty-four hours

and, having done so, step into the bath, utterly garmentless, the most unprotected animal in creation. Later, I resume pyjamas and dressing-gown and climb the cold stairs again. Immediately, more discarding of garments and more donning of different garments are necessary, shirt, trousers, waistcoat, woolly waistcoat, and jacket — you would think that with all this weight of vesture a man might face the North Pole. But no. Down the frosty stairs again, and stouter shoes must be put on my feet, still another coat must be added to the weight on my shoulders, a heavy hat must be set on my head, my hands must be protected by gloves, and my throat with a muffler. And even then when I open the front door and face a black wind that seems to be coming straight from the cold stone of hell, I do not believe that I am as warm as an owl in his feathers.

I go into the tobacconist's and have to open my coat and take off one of my gloves in order to reach my money. The coins feel like disks of ice in the fingers. I transfer a few of them to a ticket pocket so that I may not have to open my coat so wide when searching later on for my bus fare. On the bus I take off a glove again and feel for two pennies. They are so arctically chill that I feel sorry for the

conductor who has to handle zero-cold coins all day long. 'My hands are like ice,' he says to me, and the top of the bus becomes Siberia. Yet he is not wearing an overcoat. How I hate the cold! For this is not the exhilarating cold of snow or hoar-frost. It is the wicked, windy cold that comes from a black hole. It is a cold that you can not only feel but see and hear in all its hatefulness. It penetrates closed windows in mocking draughts. It wails like a banshee through suburban gardens. It blots out the beauty of earth and sky. It is a cold that makes one jealous of the hibernating animals. There are days on which it is scarcely worth while being alive. Such days usually occur in February.

Yet there was a time when I did not greatly mind the cold. The east wind and the west wind were alike to me, and I could keep reasonably warm even without an overcoat. If I were living in the country to-day I might still feel my spirits rising as I looked out and saw that the earth was frost-bound. That, however, would be for selfish reasons. I should be thinking of all the execution the frost was doing among the million pests that threatened my apple-trees and the crops I meant to grow in my garden. I should, in the most modern

spirit, welcome frost as the perfect liquidator. In earlier life, however, one's attitude to frost is aesthetic rather than utilitarian. When one is a child, one can understand how frost came to be personified as Jack Frost—a genial figure. Even the touch of ice—the first ice that has formed in the water-barrel in the yard—is agreeable. To-day, as a townsman, I abominate snow, white frost, and black frost; but forty or fifty years ago they were all as pleasant to me as the sun of a summer day. No pictures that one sees in later life, I imagine, seem lovelier than the pictures made by frost on the nursery window-panes. Those feathery patterns are not associated with coldness, but with extreme delight. And to go out into the chill of the air is no punishment but an escape into a winter paradise. Every flagstone in the pavement has been transformed into a slide. The frost on the palings invites caressing fingers. In the country there is—or was—the added pleasure of going off with one of the horses to have its shoes 'sharped' at the blacksmith's shop. Of all the sacrifices that have been made to progress, there is none that I grudge more than the blacksmith's shop. One could understand how the ancients came to look on the smith as a magician. His blazing forge, his

anvil on which he could strike sparks from fiery iron, his great hairy forearms, his way with horses, all helped to suggest that he was outside the run of common men. And how he rejoiced in his labour as he prepared the feet of horses so that they could trot safely on icy roads! I never knew a low-spirited blacksmith, though the one I knew best had intervals of madness. But, in spite of the fact that I sometimes wondered whether he would suddenly go mad while I was there, I would have gone miles to see him on a frosty morning.

And who but one approaching the semi-senility of middle age could easily grow tired of sliding across a horse-pond? Or of seeing other people sliding—country labourers launching themselves on to the ice in their great heavy-nailed boots—turning in involuntary circles and tumbling on the ice in the arms of a too impetuous overtaker? There is one thing to be said in favour of the human being: he is the only animal that seems to enjoy sliding. See a flock of geese trying to preserve their dignity as they walk across the frozen pond. Each of them, as its legs shoot from under it with disastrous results, looks as surprised as Charlie Chaplin when a beam falls on his head. Even the fiercest gander loses most of his

masculine overweeningness when he finds himself involuntarily sitting on his tail. Man alone has been able to turn helplessness into a grace—to realize that, though the ice makes it difficult for him to walk, it makes it easier for him to move still faster and in a far more exhilarating fashion.

The pleasure of skating—which is the perfection of sliding—is so boundless that I could almost sympathize with the point of view of any one who wished that it would freeze all the year round. Its pleasure, like the pleasure of golf, does not depend on the expertness of the performer. The bad skater may have his moments of jealousy when he sees feats of genius going on all around him on the ice and knows that he himself is doomed for ever to the monotony of the inside edge. But he has only to set off in the swirl of skaters to feel the heart in his breast singing—a man endowed with new powers, with the lightness almost of a spirit. I skated assiduously during only one winter, but what a winter it was—a winter that froze first the flooded meadows and ponds, then the canal, and finally the waters on the edge of immense Lough Neagh! Never did threatening thaw turn back into chilly frost but a new warmth of happiness flowed through the veins

of everybody but the aged. Midnight always came hours too soon. I do not know whether it is possible ever to grow tired of skating. Not, I imagine, in a world in which the day lasts only twenty-four hours. Yet I myself never advanced beyond the inside edge and a modest Dutch roll.

Even as I remember those raptures under the stars, the London air seems to grow warmer or, at least, less maleficiently cold. I have been suffering during the week, I tell myself, not from the weather but from middle age. I know, too, that if we had been going through a heat-wave instead of a cold-snap, my complaint would have been equally bitter. Being middle-aged, I crave for a golden mediocrity in weather—a Laodicean compromise between heat and cold. If I were a skater or a sun-bather, I might feel differently. Speaking as a sedentary townsman, however, I must say that I found the early part of this week damnably cold.



INDIFFERENCE

I WAS taking tea in the rooms of a fine scholar at King's College, Cambridge, the week before the Oxford and Cambridge Rugby match, when, in order to bring the conversation—or the lack of it—a little nearer my own intellectual level, I asked a brilliant novelist who was present: 'Are you going to the match next Tuesday?' He looked as sincerely puzzled as if I had addressed him in Gaelic. 'What match?' he asked gently. I explained to him that a football match was to take place in the following week—a match in which the fate of his beloved university would be involved, or at least seem to be involved, for about an hour and a half.

'Honestly,' he said, with a look of surprise, 'I hadn't heard about it. Had you?' he asked, turning to our host. Our host declared that the news came as a complete surprise to him also. Another scholar who was present, on being questioned on the matter, admitted that he had gathered in the course of a recent conversation that some important match was going to be played somewhere, but he did not know that it was to be against Oxford, or that it was a Rugby match, or that it was to be played at Twickenham, or that it was to take place on Tuesday.

It astonished me to find that men who were learned in every detail of the struggles between Athens and Sparta, between Rome and Carthage, could be indifferent to a struggle almost at their own doors—a struggle, too, in which the prizes were not the sordid gains of political warfare, but the magnificently empty honours of sport. All present were pacifists, yet bloody battles fascinated their intellects far more than the bloodless battles of the football field—the battles, so to speak, of the future. Such indifference to an exciting phase of contemporary life shocked me. I could have understood a stockbroker's being indifferent to the result of a great football match, but a university man,

a fine mind trained in the humanities—that was a very different affair. I left Cambridge a little saddened over the prospects of the human race.

And yet, I reflected, as I sat in the London-bound train, each of us must be indifferent to something. Each of us must have a talent for indifference if we are to have power to concentrate on the things that we were sent into the world to do. The missionary to the heathen, for example, must cultivate a fine indifference to that fine thing, money. He cannot convert cannibals very efficiently if his mind is continually preoccupied with the rise and fall of greyhound-racing-track shares. He is unlikely, again, to put his whole heart into his work if he cares as much as M. Boulestin about sauces and the perfect way of cooking trout. As regards the world and half its pleasures, he must live in the spirit of Horace's *Nil admirari*. The philosopher, too, cannot afford not to be indifferent to many of the things we ordinary mortals prize. Even if he shares our appetites, he must indulge in them, as Socrates indulged in drinking, in a mood of fundamental indifference. He cares no more for half our pleasures than a highbrow cares for a sentimental love-story in a woman's paper.

I do not suggest that indifference is always, or

even as a rule, a virtue, but it is our indifference that limits and so helps to create our personality. *Nil humanum* and so forth, said the Latin dramatist, or one of his characters in a play that I never read. It is a saying of which I doubt the wisdom. Much that is human must be alien to—or from—us, if we are to get through the day's work. Savonarola would never have become an immortal figure if he had not been indifferent to beautiful ornaments. Garibaldi would never have liberated Italy if he had not been indifferent to comfort, safety, and even the pleasure of being alive. All the great men of history have been indifferent to much that their fellow-human-beings treasured. *Nil humanum*—is there a single man of genius from Diogenes to Mr. Bernard Shaw who could have honestly taken that text for his motto?

In any case, there is no escape from indifference. Nature implanted our indifferences in us before we were born. Consider how many people one knows who are born indifferent to music. It seems almost incredible to any one who loves Mozart that people—quite likeable people—should exist to whom the songs of Mozart give no more pleasure than the noise of a buzzer or the harsh cry of a jay. Yet

experience tells us that indifference to music is a fairly common characteristic of the great and the good. Dr. Johnson had no love for music, and who would have had him otherwise? Should we have liked Dr. Johnson better if he had been a confirmed concert-goer? Do we not like him almost as much because of the things to which he was indifferent or hostile as because of the things he loved? Even poets have been known to be indifferent to all music but the music of words. Tennyson and William Morris had no ear, and it is said that Mr. W. B. Yeats could not tell the difference between the National Anthem of Great Britain and that of the Irish Free State.

It is difficult to be sure whether some people are born indifferent to poetry as others are born indifferent to music. In idealistic moments we are tempted to think that all men are born with the capacity of enjoying poetry, but that most of them gradually grow out of it. In ordinary life, however, indifference to poetry is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the human race. Scarcely anybody denies that great poetry is the greatest achievement of the human mind, and scarcely anybody reads it. Will the importance of poetry be one day questioned as the importance of

religion is widely questioned to-day? Or will poetry continue to be held in honour as the proper business of men of talent with private means?

In youth, we are impatient of those who are indifferent to our own tastes. As a boy, I could scarcely help feeling hostile to any one who was indifferent to the things about which I was enthusiastic in politics and literature. I could lose my temper easily in an argument about Stevenson and Kipling. Even my favourite seaside resort was a sacred place, and those who cared nothing for it I regarded as, at best, fools. Many food-lovers, I believe, continue throughout life to feel a similar abhorrence of those who are indifferent to food. The gourmet who, having prepared a perfect meal for his guest, finds that the man is suffering from indigestion and is unable to touch his choicest dishes, seethes inwardly with hatred. I have met a host of this kind. Before the third course arrived, he asked me: 'Do you like duck?' Seeing how the land lay, I pretended to a somewhat exaggerated passion for duck. 'I'm glad to hear it,' he said, and added in a tone of profound sincerity: 'I hate a man that doesn't love duck.' Music I might have been indifferent to, or poetry, or the World State, or even the

flowers in his beautiful garden, and he would have forgiven me. But I had to be careful about duck.

I myself have lost most of my resentment at other people's indifference. I have friends who are indifferent to birds, others who are indifferent to the sea, others who are indifferent to the country in which they were born and who take no more interest in it than in any other country. I know likeable men who are indifferent to cats, and others who are indifferent to everything sold in a bottle except medicine. How lovable Arnold Bennett was, and yet he was indifferent to Dickens! The truth is, there is not enough room in the human spirit to like everything, if we are to like anything very much.

And so it may be that those King's men were wise in their apathetic attitude to Rugby football. The football grounds on great occasions are crowded enough already without the addition of new converts. Yet I think even the King's men would have lost some of their indifference if they had been at Twickenham on Tuesday to see Cambridge running through and over an Oxford team that was almost their equal. To see Wooller kicking that drop-goal with a leg a mile long from the middle of the field was to behold a marvel. The Cambridge forward

rushes, too, broken time and again by Oxford players who, heedless of the furious feet of oncoming giants, flung themselves on the ball, were the achievement of men inspired to something above the common level of physical skill and courage. And that last half, in which the Cambridge backs, having found a breach in the Oxford defence, swung the game towards it, and time after time by the perfect use of body and brain in running and passing the ball, sent their man through the breach to score yet another try, was sport that Pindar would not have disdained to celebrate.

And yet, who knows? Plato, if he had been alive, might not have gone out of his way to see the match. Rugby, after all, is only a game, though it was difficult at some moments to feel this at Twickenham on Tuesday.

‘NOBLESSE OBLIGE’

HEARING that I had never read Edgar Wallace's novel *The Flying Fifty-five*, a friend sent it to me with warm commendations. My test of a moderately good book is whether it tempts me to neglect my work. My test of a really good book is whether it tempts me to neglect all my other pleasures. *The Flying Fifty-five* came through the second test with flying colours. I would not have laid it down to go out and see a hitherto unknown species of woodpecker. I could not have been lured from it by any crossword puzzle, wireless programme, football match, poet, or invitation to a walk in the pleasantest company this side of Paradise. Lovers of measure in speech sometimes complain of the way in which reviewers call book after book ‘fascinating.’ It seems to me, however, that ‘fascinating’ is an exact, cold-blooded description of the effect certain books produce on the reader. Did not a critic once write of a novel that, while he was reading it, his eyes were ‘literally glued to the page’? That may have been a slight exaggeration, but

I doubt whether the word 'literally' was ever misused in a better cause.

I am not suggesting that the books that fascinate us are necessarily the greatest books. There used to be a fascination about penny dreadfuls such as Dante never exercises on his most devoted readers. The penny novelette of the nineteenth century fascinated millions more women and girls than the novels of Balzac. While not comparing *The Flying Fifty-five* with penny dreadfuls and novelettes, I can see that it would be equally misleading to compare it with the best pages of Dante or Balzac. At the same time, I am, I believe, about the millionth person to have found it fascinating.

Having finished it, I could not help reflecting on the immensity of the debt that English fiction owes to the peerage—for the hero, Lord Fontwell, is one of the finest peers in or out of fiction. Disguised as a tramp, he is offered a job as stable-lad by Stella Barrington, impoverished owner of race-horses, who is moved to pity by his condition. He performs miracles with her horses at Ascot, Goodwood, and elsewhere, and in races in which he or his friends have horses that might beat Stella's he arranges for these horses to be withdrawn. The crisis comes when her chief hope for the Derby

proves to be unqualified to run. She has also Fifty-five in the race, believed to be only a sprinter, but her jockey is kidnapped at the last moment by the agent of her enemy, Sir Jacques Godfrey, who has also bought up all the other spare jockeys. What is the disguised Lord Fontwell to do? He is a man of nine stone seven—half a stone more than Derby horses carry—but he decides, none the less, to take out apprenticeship papers as a jockey, and to ride Fifty-five in the race. Does he win? He does. And not only this, but he beats his own horse, Meyrick, by a short head. “‘Bill, why did you do it?’” He took her unresisting hand in his. “‘Because I love you,’” he said in a low voice.’ That is what I call something like fiction.

Now, in the nineteenth century, popular fiction was full of peers like that. Not quite so near perfection as Bill Fontwell, perhaps, but near enough to convince hundreds of thousands of readers that the House of Lords was a veritable home of romance. In the nursery, no doubt, little girls dreamed of fairy princes and believed stories like those of Cinderella and of King Cophetua and the Beggar-maid. As they came to years of discretion, however, they acquired common sense; they became realistic.

They saw that the events reported in stories like 'Cinderella' simply could not happen in the modern world—that they were inventions intended for consumption by children. The notion that a coal-heaver's daughter might suddenly find that her lover was a member of the royal house they dismissed as romantic rubbish. In this hard-headed mood, they turned from royalty to the peerage, working it out mathematically that it was about a hundred times more likely that a lover would turn out to be a disguised peer than a disguised prince. And, unquestionably, the writers of novelettes made such a situation sound extremely probable.

I have often wondered why the peerage never played up to the novel-reader's conception of it—why peers in real life allow themselves to be surpassed to such a degree by peers in fiction. Has there ever been a peer in real life who has ridden as a jockey in the Derby at half a stone overweight and beaten his own horse for love of a beautiful girl, as Lord Fontwell did? I glanced through the Duke of Portland's entertaining book of racing reminiscences the other day, and, though there is a peer on nearly every page, I could find none of them who was not an 'also ran' in comparison with Lord Fontwell. There is an old motto, *noblesse oblige*. Were

British peers not a little forgetful of it in the last century? Did even one per cent of them attempt to live up to the picture of the ordinary decent, self-sacrificing, disguised peer painted by the novelists? If they had, I fancy the general election on the abolition of the Lords veto would have taken a different turn. The Liberal Party, if it had attempted to abolish the veto of a House of Lords composed of men like Lord Fontwell, would have had a rude awakening. It would have been swept out of existence by infuriated novel-readers, and it is probable that to-day one of the Lord Fontwells would be prime minister of a nation united in its love of fiction and of horses.

Even in the decadent pre-war world, indeed, I think the House of Lords would have been worth saving for the sake of the libraries. Yet, during the debates on the veto, not a single Diehard, so far as I can remember, ever raised the point that, while peers might be a political nuisance, they were a literary necessity. Even the Society of Authors, usually vigilant in the cause of literature, seems to have overlooked the fact that fiction, deprived of a really effective peerage, was likely more and more to wallow in Zolaism and so ultimately to lose its popularity. If this had been understood at the time,

we should have seen British authors lined up to a man behind Lord Willoughby de Broke when he declared that blood would flow under London Bridge before the veto of the House of Lords was abolished.

There is no denying that since the all but disfranchisement of the peerage gloom has spread to an alarming extent over literature. Cinderella now remains miserable in her kitchen for ever. There is no rescue for the progeny either of a moss-gatherer or of a tallow chandler. What you are born you remain—only worse. It might be thought that there are plenty of millionaires to take the place of the debilitated peers. But millionaires are not the same thing. A millionaire is only an ordinary man grown rich, and sometimes all the more vulgar for having done so. He is not a being belonging to a superior world—the world of robes and coronets that has ennobled literature since the days of Shakespeare. I was reading the new edition of Mrs. Amanda M. Ros's famous novel, *Delina Delaney*, recently, and I was struck by the thought that it would have lost half its dignity if the hero, instead of being a peer, had been merely a millionaire. I doubt whether Delina herself, the humble fisherman's orphan daughter, would have been swept off her feet so rapidly if

her lover had come to her with the offer of anything less than a title. After all, no millionaire could talk like Lord Gifford. It is only a peer—and a novelist’s peer at that—who could have shown such a command of language as Lord Gifford shows in telling Delina of Lady Mattie, the ‘high-toned society-mover’ whom his mother wishes him to marry. ‘I must tell you, my idol of innocence,’ he declares, ‘that every day of my life I hate her more and more, while her feelings for me are quite the reverse. O Lord, I simply can’t bear her.’ Continuing, he says:

‘Lady Mattie (Heaven knows who died, and if any, died and legacied her the title) is one of those willowy-washy figures who keeps rushing into this room or the other room, wherever by chance she finds a mirror to throw her image back to her in flattered fashion. She stands almost a six-footer, with her treadles thrust into shoes you’d swear that once long ago belonged to a Chinese madman; her long, thin wallopy legs enveloped in silken hose, with birds, fish, fowl, cabbage-leaves, ay, by Jove, with every species of animal, vegetable and mineral rainbowed in coloured fashioned over their flimsy fronts.’

Go into any commoner’s house in England—even into the house of the richest commoner—and you will hear no such high-toned aristocratic utterance as that. Scorn of unwanted

brides is expressed differently in baronial halls and suburban villas. What commoner, for example, could emulate Lord Gifford's derisive description to Delina of Lady Mattie's garter:

'Then her garters! Ah, ha!

'How I remember one fine day finding a lost one that had fastened itself, I presume, above or below her knee, and, thirsting, probably for a dash of fresh air, broke loose and there it lay. That garter! Composed of every colour, resembling the amethyst, opal, emerald, jasper, garnet, onyx, pearl, and sapphire, terminating in a cat's face studded with diamonds. I remember perfectly examining the article, at first wondering under Heaven what it was. I concluded it must be a necklet, and proceeded to carefully roll it up. As I coiled it, I couldn't fail seeing the word "garter" worked in emeralds about its centre. . . .'

No, whatever you may say about politics, the House of Lords has amply justified its existence in fiction. Lady Mattie's garter, Lord Fontwell's victory in the Derby—how much more exciting it all sounds than life even on the best collective farm! If more peers rode horses like Lord Fontwell, and talked like Lord Gifford, the aristocratic régime might yet be saved for Europe.

CROWDED WEEK-END

SILVER JUBILEE week has undoubtedly been a great week for sight-seeing. Millions of people have been looking at the world as eagerly as if they had never seen it before, and most of them have found it good. The child of six, with a small Union Jack in one hand and a quarter-sucked stick of Brighton rock in the other, has trailed beside his great-aunt, mile



TRAILED BESIDE HIS GREAT-AUNT

after mile after mile under archways of flags and past festoons of coloured paper rosettes and fairy-lights, and has been moved by a spectacle in comparison with which the accustomed world of sun, moon, and stars seemed commonplace. Aesthetes may complain of the scheme of decorations or the lack of it, but to the child superabundant flags and coloured paper always seem beautiful, like a loaded Christmas tree. And his father and grandfather agree with him. To them it is as if the barren streets and shop-fronts had burst into flower. Their hearts leap up when they behold a roof of bunting between themselves and the sky. The man who made the first flag in some far-off century cannot have foreseen how great an addition he was making to human happiness. He is as important a figure in the history of human jubilation as the man who made the first trumpet. Responsiveness to flags and trumpets has by now become so normal an element of human nature that no one but a man of the most determined principles can suppress it in his bosom.

If I left London for the country on Saturday, it was not in order to escape from the flags but because I have now reached an age at which I can no longer tramp the streets happily for

twenty-four hours a day sight-seeing and seeing the other sightseers. But, indeed, it was well worth going into the country, even if one had been only looking for more flags. As I drove through Guildford and Godalming, I realized how much better the small towns are suited to holiday and jubilee dress than the great cities. The wide, steep hill of the main street of Guildford, the narrow channel of the main street of Godalming, are beautiful in themselves and a natural setting for pageantry that links the present with the past. Here the flags and the festoons and the ropes of evergreens seemed to bring into the streets a brightness as of joy-bells. The very sausage-shops looked charming with coloured balloons among their wares. Even so, I passed on through them on my way into a countryside that had nobly emptied itself into town.

Never on the first Saturday in May had I seen the part of the country in which I halted such a solitude. I took two short walks, and, when I had passed the houses, I did not meet a single human being. Strong as is the passion for picking bluebells, the bluebells, thick on the banks, were for the day deserted for the flags and paper rosettes of town. The nightingale was singing among the blackthorns, their blossom

already shabby with age, but he sang to empty benches. A man who was with me was of opinion that this had affected his singing, but the nightingale in the afternoon is often a disappointing singer. He is comparable to a great musician who keeps twiddling a few bars at the piano, and then breaks off, and plays nothing through. He can be like a child, practising at the piano, and breaking down, and beginning all over again. Because of this habit, I have heard a sound English patriot denouncing the nightingale as an erratic foreigner much inferior to the true British birds, the thrush, the wren, and the blackbird, which can always be counted on to give of their best. If Dr. Johnson had been able to distinguish between one bird's song and another, I am sure he could have made out an impressive case for the superiority of the blackbird to the nightingale. A black-cap singing really rapturously in the dell, however, made it impossible to belittle the music of aliens.

Grudgingly though the nightingale sang, I look back to Saturday as a day better worth living through than Sunday. On Sunday evening I was taken by a friend who believes in seeing everything that is to be seen to an exhibition of all-in wrestling. It is a sport

that I had for long avoided seeing, for I did not like what I had heard of it. It is described as 'a Man's Sport that Women Adore,' but I am not so effeminate as all that. The printed programme was not reassuring to a nervous spectator. One of the wrestlers was Christian-named 'Hell-cat.' Another was 'the Italian Mat-Mauler.' Of another we were told: 'This guy hates referees.' Of another it was said: 'This guy stops at nothing.' Yet another was announced as 'the monocled fighting machine.'

Alarming as these descriptions sound, they made one wonder whether, after all, the whole thing was not intended to be a comic show rather than a series of serious sporting contests. The first fight looked terrifying enough, as two men made for every clutchable part of each other, flung each other on the ground, grabbed a foot and twisted it till the owner of the foot roared, got a head between the legs and held it till it looked as if the owner of the head would burst a blood vessel, while the referee, either on his knees or flat on his stomach, watched keenly for any breach of such rules as exist. The wrestler who lost the first round was vigorously booed by the audience. He stooped down and thumped the stage with his fists in apparent uncontrollable fury. He shook

his fists grimly at the gallery, and, pointing to the stage, offered a dumb-show challenge to any of his critics to come down and wrestle with him. The gallery jeered with delight. Another round began, and two men again were struggling



THE REFEREE WATCHED KEENLY FOR ANY BREACH
OF SUCH RULES AS EXIST

on the floor, rolling over and over, amid wild and joyous cries that drowned the wrestlers' groans. Arm-twisting, foot-twisting, chin-pushing with hand and foot, chopping blows on the back of the neck like the blows used in killing a rabbit, slaps, and all the rest of it went on, while the referee on his belly watched for foul play. The referee was a long-haired

young man, and, as he watched, he came within arms' reach of the supine Laocoons, one of whom suddenly seized him by the hair, flung him head over heels, and produced a magnificent dog-fight, in the course of which the referee and the wrestlers struggled with each other and tumbled and rolled about the floor together. The audience was in ecstasies, and, when the referee was rescued, resumed its hilarious booing, winning once more the hatred of the angry wrestler, who again shook his fists at them and challenged any of them who dared to come to grips with him in the ring.

The next bout was more serious, with two powerful heavyweights struggling to twist each other into submission. This all-in wrestling seemed to me to be of all sports the sport most lacking in anything to delight the eye. The postures of strong men twisting each other's limbs are ugly. Too many of the things allowed to be done are like the actions of a school bully in the subjugation of a small boy. The only thing to be said in defence is that the other man is not a small boy, but that he, too, is permitted to inflict such torment, or apparent torment, as is in his power and is permitted by the game. If the audience were silent, instead of being clamorous, the grunts and

groans of the wrestlers amid the riot of limb-twisting would be difficult to endure. The audience, however, is too happy to keep silent. What makes the wrestler groan makes the spectator shout for joy.

During one of the fights a young man behind me kept bawling in happy excitement to his favourite wrestler: 'Kill him!' 'Break his arm!' and 'Tear his pants off!' And, indeed, one wrestler with a limply hanging arm had to be attended by the doctor on the premises. Certainly, it was all very primitive and would have delighted any one who believes that men can achieve true freedom and joy only through the breaking-down of inhibitions and taboos. Here was the very Abbey of Thélème of sport. What worried me, however, was that I could not see what pleasure anybody could find in it except the pleasure of seeing other people in apparent pain.

How exquisite the world looked, none the less, the next morning at half-past seven o'clock. Those who have never seen the world at this hour on a fine May morning can have little conception of the beauty of the planet when it becomes a garden steeped in lucid loveliness. Seeing the trees and flowers moving gently in the wind and sunshine, one could not but

envy those early workers who all through spring and summer are enticed by duty from their beds into such a Paradise. When I was first wakened, I said to myself: 'I would rather stay in bed than see the Jubilee procession,' but, as soon as I had looked out of the bedroom window, the desire to see flags and horse soldiers and Fleet Street in its coat of many colours grew in me, and I was soon sailing down the hill into town in a taxicab. . . . It was a fine show. I trust that, when universal peace comes, horse soldiers will still be preserved to take part in processions as figures representative of the beauty of a once tumultuous world. 'Peace with Horse Guards' seems to me to sum up the ideal at which all pleasure-loving pacifists should aim.

THE OLD SCHOOL TIE

It must have been with a sense of relief that many people learned that the Cambridge Union had refused to pass a resolution condemning the Old School Tie. We have been living for some time past in a world of fading loyalties. It has become common to meet people who take it for granted that their country is no better and has no more claim on their affections than any other country and whom no flag waving in the wind can excite to enthusiasm. Similarly, as regards the family, more and more people have been making it clear in print that their parents were no fit objects for hero-worship. Loyalty to party, it seems to me, is also on the wane, and party leaders are continually being faced with little outbursts of unnatural rebellion. Among writers to-day, we find that a strange disloyalty to tradition has been spreading. Loyalty, indeed, seems at times to be on its last legs.

Now, I myself was brought up in a world in which 'loyal' was regarded as the finest adjective in the English language. Human

beings were divided into two classes—the loyal and the disloyal; and if a man was disloyal, no virtue, however conspicuous, could save him from condemnation. It was said, at a time when King Edward was rumoured to be sympathetic to Home Rule, that one loyalist anxiously asked another: ‘Do you think the King is loyal?’ Even the highest in the land had to be submitted to the great test. But it was not only in public life that the passion of loyalty flowed strongly. Loyalty to one’s school was as powerful as loyalty to any flag. Never during my schooldays did I meet a single boy so lost to decency as to admit that there was any tolerable school in Belfast except his own.

Not that this loyalty was drilled into us by our masters. We had no long-winded speeches from them telling us of the glorious traditions of the school and calling on us to lead nobler lives because of them. We were not taught to be loyal: we were born loyal. That is to say, we were born sufficiently egotistical to believe that our own school was the best. I held this firmly myself, and yet, somehow, much as I loved my school I also loved staying away from it. There were few mornings on which I would not rather have stayed

in bed than have hurried off after a bolted breakfast to the terrors of a Greek class with no lesson prepared. I doubt, indeed, whether, if it had not been for the wise urgency of my parents, I should have attended school oftener than once a week, or, perhaps, once a fortnight. Yet the love of the school was in my blood. Years before I went to it, I longed to go to it, as I afterwards longed to go to Rome and Florence. If I had been offered my choice among all the schools in the world, I should not have hesitated a second before choosing this one.

I did not at the time realize the labours I was letting myself in for. I saw the school in the golden haze of a dream with great men playing football for it in yellow-and-black jerseys. I had in my dream almost overlooked the endless necessity of preparing lessons. Not that I was hostile or indifferent to learning. I had felt a craving for a knowledge of the Latin tongue ever since I first saw the word *mensa*. I fell in love with Greek, too, at first sight, and, short of working, I would have done almost anything to become a Greek scholar. We human beings are often pulled two different ways, however. We may find the Greek language entrancingly beautiful; and yet at the same time may find the necessity of

turning good English into bad Greek, a gross distraction from our amusements. We may worship Greece and nevertheless think the day's portion of Xenophon deadly dull.

The truth is, I never found it easy to sit in a room in the evening and read school-books or write stuff in exercise-books. I always knew that there were several of my fellow-schoolboys roaming about the streets and I could not bear to be wasting time over a grammar while there was better company to be had outside. Even if I stayed in the house, I could usually find a more engaging book than those commended to my notice by my schoolmasters. As a result of this war of interests, I frequently approached school in the morning with an anxious heart. There is scarcely any classical author whose work it is easy for a small boy to translate without ever having set eyes on it before, and how often I have gone to school with the feeling that I might be called on to do the impossible! Luckily, there was no serious punishment in the school. A little detention, a few impositions, in the early years, but no violence to the person. I have always admired the cleverest of my contemporaries all the more because, with no dire threats to urge them on, they laid siege to learning so invincibly. It is

my conviction that some people love work as others love pleasure; this is proved by the fact that thousands of people devote a considerable part of their spare time to solving crossword puzzles. Now, it seems to me that anybody who can enjoy solving a difficult crossword puzzle ought to be able to enjoy working out a difficult problem in Horace. I myself have great fits of liking for crossword puzzles, and in earlier life I had great fits of liking for the difficult passages in the classical authors from Horace to Aeschylus. Unfortunately, I seldom seemed to like them on the same days on which my teachers wished me to like them, and, when I began to translate in class, I commonly felt as much bewildered as if I had been given a Torquemada crossword puzzle and ordered to solve it within two minutes. This sort of thing does not add to the comfort of a pupil. His only hope of avoiding unpleasantness is to make a mistranslation so glaringly ridiculous that it will compel his master to laugh. I tried this on several occasions, sometimes with success, but one has to keep a sober face while doing so and one must not join in the laughter that follows. Then one is allowed to sit down, pardoned as a butt.

Certainly, none of my masters ever treated

me in such a way as was likely to alienate my loyalty to the old school. It was not I, but a contemporary, of whom a master wrote in his report: 'An intensely lazy dog.' My masters, being truthful men, never praised me highly, but they tolerated me, and even my writing-master went as far as his conscience would allow him towards suggesting that I might one day be able to write legibly. Hence I have very few unhappy memories of school. When I read the reminiscences of some modern writers about their miserable schooldays, I can scarcely help feeling incredulous. I was never bullied, and if there was a school bully I never heard of him. Possibly, if we had all been incarcerated in a boarding-school, the repressed spirits of some of the livelier boys might have turned to bullying as an outlet. But as it was, apart from the hours spent in the unhealthy confinement of the class-room, the place was as cheerful as a play-ground. Not that the population of the school was a collection of saints or anything near it. But there were few of those miseries inflicted such as many men appear to have suffered at their schools.

At the same time, I doubt whether our loyalty to our school was entirely the result of our being happy at it. Most of us would have

been loyal to it, I fancy, even if the headmaster had been an ogre and if we had had to be rescued in our early years from bullies by the local Dobbin. So long as the school played Rugby football, and fought its rivals annually for possession of the Schools' Cup, we should have been patriots. The occasions of such battles were more to us than Agincourt, and the wars of the Greeks became affairs of minor significance on the day on which the school was playing in the Cup Final.

It is the same apparently with most seats of learning. The patriotic life of Oxford or Cambridge comes to its peak, not on a day on which a professor of one university utterly annihilates the Aeschylean text of a professor from the other, but on the day on which two boats compete on the Thames or on which two football teams crash into each other at Twickenham. Eton and Harrow, again—is it not on the playing-fields of Lord's that their greatest battles are won?

Will this patriotism, this loyalty, survive in a world of foundering traditions? Or will people become so intelligent that it will be quite common to hear a man admitting that his own university is inferior to its rival, or jeering at his old school in public? I trust human

beings will never become so intelligent as that. I am a firm believer in patriotism, provided that it is not sanguinary; and the least sanguinary forms of patriotism, it seems to me, are loyalty to one's county, loyalty to one's city, loyalty to one's suburb, and loyalty to one's school. All these are good, and none of them does anybody any harm. Of how many forms of patriotism could we nowadays say the same?

POCKET MONEY

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE and a number of other correspondents have recently written to *The Times* on the subject of children's pocket money. Mr. Ervine has been making inquiries on the matter in a country school in the south of England 'almost exclusively attended by working-class or lower middle-class children,' and has discovered that in this particular school thirty per cent of the pupils under sixteen years old are given more than a shilling a week as pocket money, thirty-six per cent get from sixpence to a shilling, eighteen per cent get less than sixpence, and sixteen per cent get no fixed amount.

Many people, looking back on their own Spartan childhood, will feel on reading this that, if the very young have not yet quite arrived at the golden age, they have at least advanced from the copper age to the silver. Before 1900 many a political economist with independent means would have been shocked at the extravagance of the poorer members of the community in giving children a shilling a week as

pocket money. The shilling, of course, is not the precious coin that it used to be, but even a weekly dole of sixpence would have seemed evidence of the incurable thriftlessness of the working-classes. Thrift and self-help were then regarded as virtues particularly praiseworthy in a working-man, and in the West End clubs the members used to talk with real concern of the increasing extravagance of miners.

Dr. Marie Stopes does not approach the question of pocket money from the point of view of a Victorian clubman, but she is very much perturbed by the thought that the gift of pocket money may undermine the character of the modern child. 'The prevalence of regular pocket money,' she declares, 'is, in my opinion, one of the keys to that lack of adult responsibility about money which is widely deplored.' Parents, she goes on, 'think they are being kind to their children when they give them a little money to spend as regular pocket money. They are not being kind; they are wasting one of the most valuable assets they could enlist on the side of independence of character.' What, then, does Dr. Stopes propose to do in order to satisfy the child's need of money and at the same time not sap the foundations of its character? The solution,

according to her, is perfectly simple. The child must earn every penny he gets, except on such occasions as a birthday. 'I have never given,' she declares, 'and never will give, pocket money in my nursery.' Her own son has kept a wages book from the age of four, in which he



TO CHOPPING WOOD, 2d.

has entered the various sums of money earned by him for doing odd jobs and signed for them. 'Looking back in that little record, one finds items such as these: to cleaning white paint in drawing-room, 2d.; to laying turf straight in garden, 4d.; to chopping wood, 2d.; to felling a tree, 6d., etc.' Dr. Stopes holds that it is perfectly easy, especially in the country, to find innumerable jobs for a child to do, the wages

from which will 'supply him with enough or more money than his less fortunate comrades have given them.' 'Spare the job and spoil the child' is apparently her motto. In her Utopia, it may be presumed, the child who had earned a penny by honest work would look down on his less fortunate comrade, who had been given a penny for nothing by a self-indulgent parent, as a parasite, or what the Bolsheviki call a *bourgeois*.

There is, however, as another correspondent, Mrs. Wood, points out, a snag in Dr. Stopes's argument. If the child is brought up on the principle, 'No work, no pay,' may he not, if a practical child, interpret it in his own interest as 'No pay, no work'? 'Surely,' writes Mrs. Wood, 'a little boy should enjoy helping his father to chop or saw wood without wanting to be paid for it. I can imagine saying to such a child: "Please run and fetch my work-basket," and receiving the reply, "How much?"' That seems to me a reasonable point. Teach the human being the value of money at too early an age, and, in six cases out of ten, he will (or may) become as cunning as a business man before he is in his teens. The black lamb of the family will refuse to get out of bed in the morning till he has been paid a

penny. He will call going to school work—far harder than felling a small tree in the garden—and will demand a fee of sixpence for his day's toil. If he is asked to gather strawberries for dinner, he will hold out his hand for his reward, and, if this is refused, he will shake his head and say: 'This is not Abyssinia, you know. Slavery has been abolished in England.' Grandmothers and great-aunts will find him a mercenary little pest, who will not even hold the wool for them or post a letter without leering at them in expectation of a tip. He will probably even refuse to play draughts with his grandmother without payment, and, as for reading the morning paper to his blind grandfather, he will say: 'I want Trade Union rates for this.' If you associate work with the idea of reward in the mind of a child, indeed, I do not see how you can define 'work' in such a way as will not leave an opening for a bad child to be for ever blackmailing his elders. To call shelling peas 'work' and to deny the name to an algebra-lesson seems to me to be a monstrous perversion of the English language.

Apart from this, it is surely better for a child to learn to associate work with enjoyment than with money-making. The child on a farm enjoys collecting the eggs, driving the cows from

the field to the byre, holding the buckets while the gentle-eyed calves greedily swallow their evening meal, giving a horse a feed of hay, gathering potatoes. When I was a child, all work on a farm seemed to me to be fun. If I had had the strength I would gladly have done it all for nothing. It was a pleasure to go into the field where the rotted flax lay drying on the ground and to 'lift' it with a tomahawk-shaped stick into bundles. It was a privilege to be allowed to fork hay to the buttermilk-swilling man on the growing haystack. There was scarcely an operation on the farm, except ringing a pig's nose, that I did not long to be able to do, and to do for nothing. I will not pretend that my enthusiasm was always of long duration when I was actually allowed to take part in the work. An unpractised boyish arm soon begins to ache under the use of the hayfork. Lifting flax, too, involves more stooping than urban muscles can endure for long without a feeling of deadly weariness. If I were perfectly truthful, I should probably say that, as a boy in the country, I enjoyed not so much work, as the idea of work. Work has an unfortunate way of becoming monotonous very soon after one has begun to do it. I can think of few things more tedious than weeding a

gravel-path with a hoe for more than five minutes. Yet I am sure that, if I were let loose on the country again, I should take to work with the old enthusiasm—and drop it with more than the old celerity. But I should never degrade it by associating it with money-making. People seem to me to be happiest when they are working for nothing and can afford to do so.

On the other hand, it may be argued that the present undermined state of my character is due to the fact that, as a child, I was given money for nothing. I cannot remember whether I was given a regular allowance of pocket money. Probably I was, and then, towards the end of the week, asked for more. I must have had enough for trams to school—for I was always too late to walk—and for buns at the lunch interval. I had certainly enough to buy papers and magazines, beginning with *Chips* and *Comic Cuts*, and rising to the *Boy's Own Paper* and the *Strand Magazine*, with numerous penny dreadfuls in the interval. Threepence was the price of admission for a boy to a football match, and a seat in the gallery of the theatre cost sixpence. Alas, I was one of the 'less fortunate' boys who obtained all these pleasures without working for them, with the result that even to-day I

would rather be a parasite, getting money for nothing, than a navvy earning his bread in the sweat of his brow.

The only thing I can say in favour of an indulgent distribution of pocket money is that it makes a child temporarily happy. I had an aunt, I remember, who liked to encourage her nephews and nieces to learn the Psalms in the metrical versions by heart, and who would offer me a shilling if I had learnt a Psalm by the end of a Sunday afternoon. As play was forbidden on Sunday, this seemed to me a not quite intolerable way of passing the time away; but, glad as I was to receive the shilling, it always somehow seemed to me to be tainted money. It never afforded me the same rapture as the two-shilling piece, unvulgarized by memories of toil, that she slipped into my hand on my departure to the seaside. My memory can conjure up scene after scene in which old and elderly people gave me half-crowns and two-shilling-pieces without any thought of return. I had an uncle who never sent a child to buy stamps without greeting it on its return with the blessed words: 'Keep the change.' This may be regarded as a reward for work done, but in fact the work was done without thought of money, and the money was

given for nothing. Incidents such as this live in the mind for ever. I think I could name with gratitude every one of the large number of persons who gave me sums over a shilling since I was three years old. I know a Member of Parliament whom, in spite of his political opinions, I hold in the deepest affection because his grandfather, a white-bearded clergyman, once gave me two shillings. There is much to be said against spoiling children by over-indulgence, but it seems to me that if you want to give them a high opinion of human nature, the best thing to do is to begin by giving them money.

SLEEP FOR ALL

I HAVE never been one of those who sneer at people who give good advice. On the contrary I realize that if I had followed all the good advice that has been given to me since my birth, I should now be a better man. My nurse was right; my uncle was right; my schoolmasters were right; my professors were right. I rejected their advice, it is true, but even at the time I suspected that most of it was sound. The reason why I rejected it, I think, was twofold. First, there is a certain pleasure, a bravado pleasure, in defying one's elders. Secondly, every lazy inch of one's body, every lazy penny-weight of one's spirit, shrinks from the expenditure of energy needed to carry out their instructions as to the achievement of *mens sana in corpore sano*.

As one grows older, one loses one's pleasure of bravado in defying one's elders; but the body and the spirit become lazier, more and more disinclined for effort—at least, mine do. As a result, I am even worse off as a man than I was as a boy, when it comes to trying to follow

the advice of those whom I believe to be wiser than myself. I like miracles, but the givers of good advice nearly always order exercises. Do your exercises, they tell us, and you will improve in body, mind, or soul—perhaps in all three. Now, this is to command us to become ascetics, for an ascetic, I understand, means simply a man who is perpetually performing exercises. If you are born with the instincts of an ascetic, this is easy enough. You can even enjoy yourself as you perform the exercise of not smoking, not drinking, not eating meat. If you are not a predestined ascetic, however, these exercises call for an all but Herculean effort. You have to devote time and thought to them. You are at war with yourself all day long, and civil war of this kind is extremely uncomfortable. Hence you feel tempted to postpone this interior cataclysm as long as possible. You promise yourself that you will be an ascetic *alsbald*, but you translate *alsbald*, not as ‘forthwith’ but as ‘in due course.’ The only difference between the practising ascetic and yourself as you see it is that he is the ascetic of to-day and you are the ascetic of to-morrow—that he is a realist and you are an idealist. I am—I say it in no spirit of boastfulness—one of the idealists.

There are, however, practical enough reasons

why we idealists shrink from the performances of those exercises enjoined upon us for the sake of health of body, mind, or soul. If we performed all these exercises, we ask ourselves, when should we find time either to work or to enjoy ourselves? Physical exercises alone would rob us of a quarter of an hour in the morning, and, if we were wise, of another quarter of an hour at night. Then, in order to preserve our sight we should have to perform eye-exercises. How can a man who is already late for an appointment find time to shut his eyes and swing them from side to side as far as they will go twenty-five times, as if he were watching the movement of a pendulum? And this is only the beginning of them. He is conjured also to close his left eye and with his right eye look for five seconds at the point of his nose and then for another five seconds at some distant object. He must follow this by shutting his right and looking with his left eye at the point of his nose, and so forth; and he closes the exercise by looking with both eyes at the tip of his nose and then at a distant object, and looking from one to the other and back again a stipulated number of times. I am certain that all this is good for the sight, but it needs both time and perseverance, and I have neither.

Another method of self-improvement that I should like to go in for is breathing exercises. These may be either elaborate or simple. One exercise is to breathe into the abdomen, while massaging the solar plexus and repeating a quatrain from Omar Khayyám. Another is to stand at an open window and inhale and exhale for five minutes as if you were smelling a flower. I prefer the second method, but even here time fails me and my will flags. Coué exercises, chewing exercises, memory exercises—how I wish I had done them all yesterday, how I long to do them all to-morrow, and how utterly impossible I find it to do any of them to-day!

And now come sleeping exercises to be added to the long list of exercises that I cannot do, but that I should very much like to do if I had time. I have always in the past felt grateful for being able to sleep at all, but here comes a new book, *How do You Sleep?* in which the author, Mr. L. E. Eeman, tells me that it is my business, not only to sleep, but to sleep in a particular way. 'Sleep,' he declares, 'is fundamentally work and not rest.' Such is the contrariness of human nature that, if I had been told this earlier, I should probably have avoided sleep like a plague. 'The chief characteristic

of sound sleep is,' Mr. Eeman continues, 'that it promotes sound repair work.' The great thing then is to become efficient, instead of inefficient, sleepers. Among the inefficient sleepers, I am glad to see, is placed the odious person who is always boasting that he falls asleep as soon as his head touches the pillow. Mr. Eeman has no patience with this fellow. 'Before sleep,' he warns us, 'always relax carefully the whole body, and rest for a time with your hands clasped and your feet crossed before you allow yourself to turn on your side to lose consciousness.' Those who do this 'by linking their terminals . . . complete two circuits, keep their energy circulating within themselves and store it.'

If this were all that is required in order to obtain enough energy to sleep efficiently, I think I could manage it. Unfortunately, you must also practise all sorts of exercises in order to discharge energy from your brain to your body 'via your vaso-motor nerves.' With clasped hands and crossed feet, you have to concentrate your mind on each part of the body in turn for a few seconds. 'Work upwards and inwards, commencing with the limbs: the feet, ankles, calves, knees, thighs, hips, the fingers and hands, wrists, forearms, elbows and upper

arms, shoulders, shoulder-blades.' At a later stage in the exercises you must 'think of your brain, including its outer shell, and conceive it as loose, free, relaxed, and imagine blood circulating freely and abundantly through it, and flushing it, just as it flushes the cheeks of a blushing child.' Go ahead after this, and 'think of the whole inside of your trunk, also loose and relaxed, completely open to circulation, and imagine blood flushing, warming, nourishing, and scavenging every organ.' If that does not give you a good nightmare, nothing will.

Even then, however, your work is not at an end. Mr. Eeman prescribes a course of deliberate day-dreams. For example, with clasped hands and crossed feet, you may imagine you are running a quarter-mile—to me another nightmare. 'A great many golfers, tennis players, artists, etc., have improved themselves beyond recognition by this simple method.' I cannot help wondering, however, how any one who performs all the exercises described in the book finds time to sleep. You have, for example, to 'imagine yourself enjoying the activities of your five senses in turn, carefully observe and memorize the changes in circulation, respiration, and well-being produced by each successive image.' You imagine

beautiful things seen and heard. 'Then take "taste" and mentally place in your mouth and chew, taste, and swallow, acid, sweet, bitter and salt foods, such as lemon, sugar, chicory, and salt, and any fruit or other eatable you fancy.' You will find that you get fuller expansion in respiration when you think of a lemon than when you think of chicory. That is probably due to the presence of vitamins in the imaginary lemon.

Mr. Eeman protests warmly against the view of those who regard such day-dreams as a form of self-deception. He instances the man who conjures up the dream of a dead parent as of a person who is still alive. 'There is,' he declares, 'no more self-deception in deliberately forming the image of your mother alive twenty-four hours after her death than there is in accidentally conjuring it up ten years later. In both cases, you know perfectly well that the lady is dead, but you breathe better when you imagine her in the fulness of life.'

Well, Mr. Eeman is an ex-airman who has cured himself of insomnia and taught himself to sleep efficiently by the methods he advocates. I commend his book (Author-Partner Press, 3s. 6d.) to those who have stronger wills than I. Even I, as the holiday season approaches, may

be tempted to clasp my hands and cross my feet and practise some of these extraordinary exercises. 'Think,' says Mr. Eeman, 'of your tongue, loose and relaxed, of your mouth watering profusely and of swallowing.' If it will improve my golf, I certainly will.



ONE'S HABITS

AT a west of England hotel at which I was staying, a waiter came up to me with a half-finished packet of cigarettes, and said: 'Are these your cigarettes, sir?' I told him that I did not know, and asked him where he had found them. 'They were on the writing desk in the corner,' he said; 'I think they must be yours, sir, because the packet has been opened at the top.' 'Why, what other way is there of opening a packet of cigarettes?' I asked. 'Well, sir,' he replied, as deferentially informative as Jeeves himself, 'you see, most gentlemen tear the paper wrapping off before opening the packet, but I took particular notice that you never take the wrapping off but just open the packet at the top. Didn't you know that, sir?' I confess I was amazed. Here was a Sherlock Holmes in a remote part of England who in the course of three days could tell me

things about my habits that I did not know myself. I had never before realized either that I habitually opened cigarette packets in one particular way or that my particular way differentiated me from the mass of civilized mankind. I had always thought of myself as a creature of few habits, and those mostly bad; yet here I was exposed as a slave of habit even in so trifling a matter as getting the first cigarette out of a new packet.

It is not that I am theoretically an enemy of habit. In my opinion, no greater nonsense was ever talked than Pater's observation that 'in a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits.' There may be a germ of half-truth in the saying, but no man who has had the misfortune not to be able to form habits will accept it at its face-value. I myself suffer daily as a result of never having formed habits even in such simple things as putting money, tickets, and such things in one particular pocket. It is perfectly absurd to know that one has plenty of money on one's person and yet not to be able to find it without making as much fuss as if one were chasing biting insects all over one's body. In shops, restaurants, and elsewhere in such circumstances, the sensitive man feels that the shopkeeper, waiter, or occupant of the cash-

desk is observing him with suspicion, disguised as a patient smile, and wondering—especially in restaurants—whether the whole thing is not a deliberate try-on. Many years ago I had the humiliating experience of having to leave my name and address at a Piccadilly restaurant because, though I knew I had money in some pocket or other, I could not find it when it came to paying the bill. A friend of mine, once noticing the haphazard way in which I kept paper-money in my various pockets, much of it lost among a medley of letters and other documents in my breast-pocket, said to me: ‘You have no sense about money. You don’t know how to keep it,’ and presented me with a note-case, when I was on the eve of going abroad. I put all my paper-money into the note-case, feeling that I was a practical man at last. Within a week, unfortunately, a still more practical pickpocket—one of those foreigners—managed to get hold of the note-case and robbed me of a far larger sum than any pickpocket had ever succeeded in taking from me in my more unpractical days.

You may think that this should have converted me to a disbelief in habit, tidiness, order and so forth. If you do, you are wrong. The most that it converted me to was a belief that

there is something to be said on both sides of the question. I am convinced, for example, that in the ordinary affairs of life the man who knows in which pocket his money is, is in a vastly superior position to the man who does not know in which pocket his money is, and yet that, in relation to pickpockets, the man who does not know in which pocket his money is, is the more fortunate. For, if a man himself does not know where his money is, how can a passing stranger know? I have sat up all night in the smoking-room of a boat with a friendly stranger who, I afterwards heard, was a pickpocket, and he might have been the Archbishop of Canterbury for all he took from me. The only effective way of picking my pockets would be to sandbag me, and even then it would take a long time to find the money. I warn potential sandbaggers, however, that as a rule I have little more money about me than will cover the expenses of a quiet citizen's day.

Apart from money, there is everything to be said for habit. How foolish it is, for example, for the man who travels by bus or train, not always to put his ticket into the same pocket! He who does so can alone face ticket-inspectors with equanimity. With him the production of

a ticket is a matter of routine, and the whole thing passes like magic. The man who cannot find his ticket, however—what a nuisance he is to himself and to everybody else! I always



THE MAN WHO CANNOT FIND HIS TICKET

think, when he isn't myself, that he looks such a fool. Sometimes I pity him for his flustered helplessness: sometimes, as he plunges desperately into one pocket after another, his lack of dignity and his waste of precious moments through sheer incompetence irritate me. He

seems a particularly poor specimen of the human race, and all through lack of a little system. I feel like asking him whether he hasn't a ticket-pocket and, if he has, what he thinks the tailor gave him a ticket-pocket for. On such occasions, I am all on the side of the man of habit, sneering and jeering at a weaker brother. Talking of ticket-pockets, by the way, reminds me that in my latest suit my tailor has forgotten to include one. At first I resented the omission, but, on second thoughts, I realized that the tailor had done me a good turn. If I lose a ticket in the future, I shall now have one pocket fewer in which to lose it.

Then there are spectacles. How enviable is the man who can always produce his reading-glasses at a moment's notice—who has formed the habit of carrying them in one particular pocket—who can even be sure that, when he leaves the house, he will find them in any pocket at all! For myself, I should not like to be asked to add up all the minutes I have wasted looking for my spectacles in the course of a year. The total, if it would not stagger humanity, would certainly stagger me. So uncertain am I of remembering my spectacles that I am compelled to carry an eyeglass as a sub-

stitute for an emergency. Talk about the slave of habit! The true galley-slave is the man who, because he is not the slave of habit, is always mislaying things and hunting for them.

I am especially conscious of this when I want to consult a book. I have a considerable number of books and a great love of seeing books well arranged, with every volume in its allotted place—everything necessary, indeed, to an orderly student except the habit of putting a book back on the shelf when I am finished with it. As a result, I spend almost as much time in looking for books as in reading them. If I want to verify a quotation from Browning, the volume that contains the passage is always the volume that is missing. If I want something in the first volume of Mr. E. V. Lucas's *Life of Charles Lamb*, I can find only the second. I see dictionaries all over the house when I am looking for something else, but, when at a crisis I crave for a dictionary more than any other book in the world, all the dictionaries seem to have melted into thin air. It is as though my books were inspired with a spirit of mischief and took their revenge on me for my carelessness by wasting my time in a never-ending game of hide-and-seek. The

very Bible hides from me when I want to read it.

Hence I praise above all others the life of habit, order, and discipline, and I disagree vehemently with Montaigne when he declares that 'a young man should break in upon his rules, to stir up energy and keep it from becoming mouldy and lazy; for no course of life is so foolish and feeble as that which is carried out according to rules and discipline.' This may have been good enough advice for gentlemen of private means in the sixteenth century, but it is of no use to a generation that has discovered the beauty of machines and must more and more conform itself to the beautiful and orderly ways of machines. Give me the train that starts punctually, the clock that habitually tells the right time, the man who breakfasts at eight sharp every morning and always carries his ticket in the same pocket. To live like a machine in all those matters that do not matter—this is to live successfully. To live mechanically is to be a free spirit, unclogged by the constant necessity of turning aside from the proper business of life to engage in a silly hunt for books and spectacles. I thank my stars that I have at least one habit, if it is only the habit of opening a cigarette-packet in one

particular way. It is a small thing, but may it not be the seed of a punctuality, order, and discipline that will ultimately spread through my whole being? All is not lost. The west-country waiter has given me hope.

10,000 THINGS

I WAS recently sent an advertisement of a work for the young, entitled *The World of Wonder*. The heading of the advertisement ran: '10,000 Things Every Child Should Know.' I could not help wondering, when I read this, whether the human brain is more precocious than it used to be and whether the modern child can be at least ten times cleverer than the children among whom I grew up. I am sure that in my own infancy no one expected me to know anything like 10,000 things. We were expected to know such things as the names of the Twelve Apostles, the Kings and Queens of England in the right order (with their wives and husbands), the area of Lake Michigan, the length of the Yangtze Kiang, the chief exports of the Gold Coast, the proof that the earth was round, the multiplication table, and, as we grew older, the French for 'pen' and 'aunt' and the Latin for 'O table!' But I doubt whether by the age of fifteen any of us could have answered even 1,000 questions, let alone 10,000.

Knowledge has undoubtedly increased since those days, and knowledge that was then thought valuable is now accounted valueless. There are modern schools, it is said, in which it is considered more important for a boy to know the facts of sex than to be able to name the books of the Old Testament in the right order. This would have seemed very odd to my aunts. Even spelling was in the nineteenth century looked on as a more important branch of education than sex. Spelling, however, is nowadays openly derided in some quarters as a study for pedants. Spelling itself has in some respects changed. Time was when we lost marks in an examination paper if we spelt 'judgment' with two 'e's.' To-day the highest authorities tell us that the correct way to spell 'judgement' is with two 'e's.' I do not think we need care very much how we spell a word, if we all spell it the same way; but it seems curious to teach the children of one generation that one spelling is right, and the children of the next that another spelling is right. Having made a mistake in spelling, our teachers should stick to it.

I am not sure that it matters a great deal what children are taught. They will forget most of it in any case. I have forgotten alike

the order of the books of the Old Testament and the names of the tributaries of the Danube. I do not remember either what causes frost or the name of the wife (if any) of the prophet Haggai. What chiefly matters, however, is to keep the brain and the memory of the child temporarily busy. This used to be done largely by lessons in Latin grammar and by teaching the dates of battles fought by races that have long since perished. It was as harmless a form of education as could be devised. I have heard many arguments against the teaching of Latin, but I never knew a boy to be seriously damaged by it. The very look of the first Latin word we see seems to me to awaken the imagination. It has the effect of foreign travel, taking us into a world, indeed, that is foreign to our own both in place and in time. I confess I fell in love with *mensa* at first sight, and I would not have exchanged the wall that Balbus built for the walls of Troy or of Derry. My elders declared that Latin grammar was important, because it provided the ideal form of mental gymnastics; but I never believed so utilitarian an argument. What it provided me with was excitement — the excitement of strange and beautiful words set in a strange order, and, though I never became a scholar or pursued

my studies very diligently, I am sure I got more pleasure from odd lines and snatches of Virgil and Horace than from *The Arabian Nights*.

Many men, looking back on their school-days, declare that they were bored by their Roman studies, but I never worked hard enough to be bored. Even in the English class I was a tolerant listener, though I came near being bored by the verse narratives of Sir Walter Scott. In this respect I find that I am in a small minority, for Sir Walter's verse as a rule stirs the boyish heart. For myself, I was a devotee of his prose, but had no relish for learning his cantos by heart at the rate of twenty lines a day. Milton, on the other hand, because of the flavour of his phrases, was as exciting as a Latin exercise. Many people say that you spoil great poetry for the young by turning it into a school lesson, but I believe this to be nonsense. If you meet a man who says that he cannot read Shakespeare because he had to learn the plays at school, you may be reasonably sure that the tastes with which he was born lay outside Shakespeare. I doubt whether the taste for poetry can be destroyed by teaching children either good poetry or bad. I sometimes wonder, indeed, whether anything is of very much

importance in education except the character of the teacher.

If I have any grudge against the schools that I attended it is that they made no effort to dispel our ignorance of the history or the natural history of our countryside. There was enough legend and history at our doors to stack an *Iliad*, yet, apart from a few dry-as-dust facts, we were told none of it. As for nature, we learnt more about the mountains of Central America than about the birds that sang in our gardens, the trees that grew in our parks, and the flowers of the field. It may be that there are compensations for such ignorance, for we can enjoy the excitement of a second childhood in later life when we discover the treasures amid which we grew up so blind. At the same time I think the happiness of childhood is enormously enlarged by a knowledge of the appearances and the songs of the birds and by the ability to recognize and name the flowers and the butterflies as they return at their proper season. It may be thought that any one born with a taste for such things would develop it without tuition, and this is possibly true of the child born in the country. The town-bred child, however, is a prisoner of the town during the most exuberant time of the year and has

almost as little chance of knowing the birds and the flowers as of knowing Latin grammar, unless his elders direct his imagination to them. Seldom visiting the country except in high summer, I was better acquainted with the breeds of farmyard poultry than with the birds in the trees and hedges. I do not mean to say that I did not know the difference between a wren and a yellowhammer, but I was more than thirty years old before I could recognize the song of a hedge-sparrow. Yet the song of the hedge-sparrow is, I hold, one of the 10,000 things every child should know.

It is to my mind—at least, for persons like myself—more important to know the song of a hedge-sparrow than to know ‘the working of locomotives, the Diesel engine, a gas engine, and even the working of our own muscles and nerves,’ illustrations of which are provided for the young in *The World of Wonder*. There are, I believe, many children who are constitutionally incapable of understanding the working of a machine. I cannot even understand the working of my motor car. I know what ensues when I press the accelerator or put on the brake; but what exactly takes place in the bowels of the car when I press the accelerator I should be puzzled to explain in an examination paper. It

is the same with my portable wireless-set. I do not know why by tuning this small box in a certain direction and by fiddling with a knob and a wheel I can persuade waves of sound into my room from Moscow. I do not know what part the accumulator plays in the mystery, or what part the dry battery. I can make use of these things for practical purposes, but I am as ignorant of their working as of the working of my digestive system. I should like to know about them, but in matters of science and machinery I quickly get out of my depth and realize that it would be useless to try to go further. Obviously, it is important that a certain proportion of children should know these things, and probably in an age of machinery a greater and greater proportion of children will get to know them; but for myself and others like me, they must remain as unattainable as the peak of Everest.

It is possible that if I bought *The World of Wonder* I should find myself an entranced discoverer of a new world of knowledge as I was when I first began to know a little about birds and flowers. The scales might suddenly fall from my eyes, and I might feel the same initiate's excitement that I felt when I first opened a Latin Grammar. I would give a great deal to

possess not only an appetite for knowledge but the power to absorb it. If ever I acquire this, it will certainly be from a book written for children, for I shall have to go back to the ABC of the matter. An elderly man in a hotel told me some years ago that he was a regular subscriber to a child's magazine, because it was full of really exciting and informing articles about things that he had always wanted to understand. Perhaps *The World of Wonder* will perform me as useful a service. I can at least have a shot at the working of the Diesel engine. If I can understand that, I shall live in the hope of being able in the course of time to meet the modern child as an intellectual equal.



BUTTER, ETC.

It is said that, of the many German football fans who recently came to London, all but a few spent their spare time in eating butter and their spare cash in buying butter to take home. To the ordinary German visitor the most fascinating spectacle in London was not Buckingham Palace or St. Paul's Cathedral, but a restaurant with unlimited supplies of butter. This was not because Germans naturally love butter more ardently than the men of other races, but because they have recently been deprived of butter by their rulers and because human beings love most passionately the things of which they have been deprived. It is evident that the majority of Germans do not agree with the contemptuous expressions used about butter by General Goering. 'Metal made an empire strong,' said the anti-dairy general; 'butter

only made people fat. Either they bought butter and went without freedom, or they achieved freedom and went without butter. Nazis had decided for the iron, and that was the cause of the butter shortage.'

In talking like this, General Goering is obviously flying in the face of the mass of the civilized opinion of Europe. Civilization, as you will see from a study of the hoardings and advertisement columns, is at present almost unanimous in maintaining that salvation comes of eating more and drinking more of everything. We are told that we must eat more bread, fish, meat, fruit, vegetables, dairy produce, seaweed, and sweetmeats, and that we must drink more milk, tea, barley-water, lemon juice, stout, beer, whisky, gin, and Empire wine. An occasional medical eccentric—a lover of contradiction for contradiction's sake—decries all this, and warns us to abstain from most of the things in which the advertisers are encouraging us to over-indulge, and to be sparing in our consumption of the rest. I know one man who, if he had as much money as the advertisers, would most certainly be covering the hoardings with great posters saying: 'Drink less milk.' I know of others who would be as eager to run an advertising campaign against our present consumption of

EAT MORE



WE ARE TOLD THAT WE MUST EAT MORE BREAD, FISH,
MEAT. . . .

meat, vegetables, tea, tap-water, and whisky. But I have never met a man—not even a crank—who believed that we could be saved by eating less butter. Even the adversaries of milk are of the opinion that in the process of butter-making all the most harmful constituents of the milk disappear. Yet here comes General Goering with his perverse slogan: 'Eat less butter,' implying that only through abstinence from butter, or all but abstinence, can his fellow-countrymen become free.

There seems to me to be a good deal of false reasoning in General Goering's argument. 'Butter,' he declares, for example, 'only makes people fat'—which is not true. Most of us have been born and lived in the company of butter-eaters, and I for one have never noticed that the fatness of the individual varied with the amount of butter he ate. The greatest butter-eater I ever knew was as lean as a rake. The fattest woman I ever knew used to spread butter on her breakfast toast with the knife of a miser. I myself have been a butter-eater all my life, but, in spite of this, I have remained little more than a wraith. The truth is, the medical profession has never been able to discover—to the satisfaction of anybody but itself—what it is that makes people fat or thin.

I knew one whisky-drinker who used to attribute fatness and all the other ills from which his fellows suffered to the excessive consumption of soda-water. 'It 's the soda does it,' was his invariable comment when he heard that yet another friend of his was in the hands of the doctor. Yet I have seen lean men of advanced years mingling soda-water with their whisky with no apparent ill consequences. If you pointed this out to my friend, however, he would gravely answer: 'It 'll get them yet.' There is no means of shaking faith so dogmatic as this. People with food-fads and drink-fads are as far beyond the reach of argument as Fundamentalists. They are mystics who can see the Devil in a boiled potato or a glass of Burgundy. General Goering obviously belongs to this class. He has come to the conclusion that butter ruins men's bodies and souls, and that butter-eating is the prime cause of the decay of nations; and no facts that you bring to his notice in disproof of this could move him from his opinion. Ask him why Babylon fell, and he would, I am sure, reply: 'Butter.' Ask him why Athens perished, and again he would almost certainly reply: 'Butter.' Examine him as to the causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, and again, being a

man of strong convictions, he would pronounce the one word: 'Butter.'

His theme, indeed, in his speech to his fellow-Germans, was that butter and freedom cannot co-exist. 'Either they bought butter,' he told them, 'and went without freedom, or they achieved freedom and did without butter.' I do not think there is a single page in any historian, from Thucydides to Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, that justifies this opposition between butter and freedom. Can General Goering give an example of even one butter-eating nation's having been vanquished by a nation that went butterless? Such a thing may have happened in the East, though I doubt it, but in Europe, I fancy, most of the conquerors have been confirmed butter-eaters. In the seven centuries that the English conquest of Ireland lasted, there was, unless I am mistaken, considerably more butter eaten per head by the people of England than by the people of Ireland. During the prolonged Home Rule controversy the Irish made butter, but the English ate it. Then came the Great War which brought about a butter shortage in England, but left Ireland undepleted and with as much butter as any one chose to eat. For the first time in history Ireland became one of the leading butter-eating nations

of Europe. This was a prelude to the establishment of the Irish Free State. Thus butter, instead of being the enemy of freedom, was the ally and furtherer of freedom. Facts of this kind ought to weigh even with a convinced butter-hater like General Goering.

And, even if the facts were otherwise, there are many people, I imagine, who would doubt whether freedom that kept on involving one butter-shortage after another was worth having. Freedom is one of the most desirable things in the world, but I have always thought that, with all its other fine qualities, it ought to be something that one can taste at breakfast. Philosophers tell us that freedom is a condition of the soul; but, among us ordinary human beings, the desire for freedom is usually linked with the desire to see our children (and ourselves) raised above the necessity of living in hovels and without enough to eat. A chicken in every citizen's gas-oven is a more warming ideal than any abstract formula. General Goering recommends instead of this a diet of gun-metal. According to him and his leader, however, a diet of gun-metal did not lead to freedom in the past, and it is difficult to see why it should lead to it in the future. The Versailles Treaty imposed a certain amount of servitude on

Germany, but this was not on a Germany that had over-indulged in butter, but on a Germany that had over-indulged in gun-metal. The moral of this seems to be that, if you wish to be free, you should avoid gun-metal and stick to butter. It has often been said that no nation ever became or remained free unless it was ready to defend its rights with arms. It would be equally true, or nearly so, to say that no great nation ever lost its freedom except after having shown an excessive readiness to assert its rights with arms. Gun-metal certainly proved the ruin of Napoleonic France as of the Kaiser's Germany. Butter may make you fat, but gun-metal may leave you a skeleton.

And, apropos of freedom, it seems a very odd sort of freedom that prevents you not only from eating butter, but from marrying whom you please, shopping where you please, reading what you please, saying what you please, and going where you please. According to these modern European notions of freedom, I should be perfectly free if I were forbidden by the Government to travel out of England, forbidden to have certain friends, forbidden to visit certain restaurants, forbidden to read anti-Government newspapers, forbidden to criticize Mr. Baldwin even at the dinner-table, forbidden

to live abroad if I wished to do so, forbidden to have my children brought up in the way which I believed might make all the difference to their happiness throughout eternity. I confess that, much as I love freedom, I do not think that freedom of this sort is worth going without butter to attain. In my opinion, indeed, butter is one of the prerequisites of real freedom. It soothes the nerves and so enables us without bitterness to endure the spectacle of other people being free. What the world needs to-day is more and more butter. As truth lives at the bottom of a well, so it may ultimately be found that liberty lurks at the bottom of a well-stocked butter-dish.



WITHOUT GLASSES

I WAS staying in the country recently when a well-meaning hand, engaged in dusting my bedroom, swept my glasses off the mantelpiece where I had placed them for safety. The culprit, an elderly man named Potter, his face full of kind-hearted misery, brought the fragments to the lunch-table, holding them at first behind his back and saying, 'I have a confession to make.' He was going ahead admirably with the story of his crime and the expression of his contrition, when my hostess interrupted him and said: 'Now, Potter, you mustn't let it worry you. It doesn't really matter a bit. Besides, it wasn't your fault. It was Mr. Y's fault for leaving his spectacles on the mantelpiece. And it's only the frame that is broken; the lenses are all right. They will be quite easily mended. Now cheer up and don't give it another thought.'

When Potter, considerably cheered up, had left the room, she looked at me censoriously and said: 'How unfeeling you are, sitting there in silence and not telling poor old Potter that

it didn't matter.' 'But it does matter,' I protested; 'I shan't be able to read for several days.' 'No,' she agreed, 'but the mischief's done, and making poor old Potter suffer won't mend your glasses any more quickly. You could see that the poor old man was feeling perfectly miserable.' 'I 'm feeling rather miserable myself,' I replied; 'and, besides, I couldn't tell Potter that it didn't matter, because you were complimenting him so lavishly on having broken my glasses that I couldn't get a word in edgeways.' 'Well,' she said, 'you needn't have looked so glum, anyway. Potter 's so sensitive that a thing like that cuts him to the heart. You ought simply to have owned up that it was all your fault for having left the glasses on the mantelpiece.'

Now, I am a firm believer in the value of sympathy, but I thought my hostess somewhat lacking in it towards myself. As regards Potter, I was perfectly ready to forgive him, but I like to forgive people in my own way. I like the culprit to realize that he is being forgiven and to be under no illusion that he is innocent. I do not rub it in in words, but there is a certain expression on a forgiving countenance, a certain tone in a forgiving voice, that can make a man who has broken your spectacles feel horribly

guilty. When you have broken his spirit with this expression and this tone, a wave of rosy benevolence steals through your being and you almost begin to like the man for having done what he has done. The more he expresses his sorrow, the more you ooze good will, till in the end, in all the glory of self-satisfied generosity, you assure him that the thing was only an accident and that you yourself have broken your spectacles dozens of time. In this way you serve at the same time truth, self-worship, and the cause of human brotherhood.

That, more or less, is the way in which I should have liked to forgive Potter, if my hostess had given me a chance. For it was quite impossible for a truth-loving man to pretend that the disruption of the spectacle-frame did not matter. It mattered extremely indeed, since my pair of emergency spectacles, having suffered a similar disaster, was at the moment in the hands of an optician. It is true that I had an eye-glass, but, though I find an eye-glass useful for reading the menu in a restaurant, I cannot read books and newspapers with it easily. My hostess offered to do her best to mend the glasses temporarily with sticking-plaster, and she did her best—that is the best that can be said for her effort. I

tried to read with the bandaged spectacles, but I had never read long till I was aware of a certain sagging of the frame on the bridge of the nose and the whole thing came in two again. It is impossible to read with much pleasure if one is on the look-out all the time, ready to catch the two halves of one's spectacles on their way from one's nose to the floor. As a result, I spent a miserable week-end. Surrounded by books and newspapers that I wished to read, I was almost as helpless as a blind man. I tried to work out a crossword puzzle with the help of a magnifying glass, but I had to give it up in despair. It was quite impossible to read the numbers in the telephone directory. I ultimately found that it was possible to read books I already knew slowly through an eyeglass, and turned from the newspapers to *Hamlet*. A pretty pass, was it not? to which Potter's zeal as a duster had brought me!

This inability to read with the naked eye is one of the curses attached to long sight. As a boy, I was rather vain of my long-sightedness, and felt inwardly boastful when I was able to read lettering at a greater distance than any one else in the company. Little did I know that if one can see things at a long distance in childhood, one is punished by being

unable to see things at a short distance in middle age.

It is only in the last year or two that I have taken to wearing reading-glasses, but I suspect that I ought to have begun wearing them twenty years ago. I was actually sent to an oculist towards the end of the war, and ordered to wear spectacles, but nothing came of it. He was a very charming man who kept making me look through various lenses at radiating lines, letters of the alphabet, and so forth, and asking me, 'Do you see better now?' till, weary of saying 'No,' I said 'Yes,' in order to please him. When the interview was over, and I had given him any number of misleading answers, I asked him how much I owed him. He looked at me in a friendly, appraising way and asked me: 'Is your income under £150 or over?' I admitted that it was over £150; upon which he laughed and said: 'Ah, I see you're just like me. You don't mind how you dress. Two guineas.' As I walked with his prescription to the optician's I kept puzzling as to whether or not he had meant to pay me a compliment. I certainly noticed nothing wrong about my clothes, apart from my hat, and began to suspect that the oculist himself must have bad sight. I did my best to obey him, however. Having procured

a pair of pince-nez spectacles, I went out into the world with them and they fell off and were shattered on the pavement. I bought another pair and they fell off and were shattered on the study floor. I bought another pair, and they fell off and were shattered on the office stairs. Concluding that the bridge of my nose was ill-built for the purpose of wearing pince-nez, I ordered a pair of glasses which could be fastened behind the ears with a sort of wire. I had not worn them for a week when I found that they were tearing my ears to pieces. I put them away in a drawer, and discovered that I could read and see as well, if not better, without them. And I never wore glasses again until about two years ago.

The punishment of long-sightedness kept creeping nearer, however. I complained more frequently of the badness of the electric light. When I read a newspaper, I had to hold it at arm's length. If only I could have stretched my arms a foot or two longer, I should probably have been able to read without spectacles to the present day. My arms would not stretch, however, and at last I was compelled to pay a second visit to an oculist. Luckily he had all kinds of new devices for testing the sight which made it possible for the patient to

tell the truth. As a result, he provided me with a perfect pair of spectacles with tortoise-shell rims that wounded neither the nose nor the ears. To see through them was like being born into a new world. A beautiful clear light dwelt upon the printed word, and even the small type of the sporting page became miraculously magnified. In my enthusiasm, I should have liked to put the whole human race into spectacles. Those who do not know what it is to wear spectacles for the first time have missed one of the exquisite pleasures of life.

I experienced this pleasure over again this week when I got back my mended spectacles from the optician. My heart leaped up when I beheld through them something even better than a rainbow—the print of a newspaper. For some days I had been a frustrated man, unable to read comfortably anything but the headlines, compelled to pass the time listening to wireless programmes, tempted to go to films that I did not want to see, helpless except in the company of talkative friends. The truth is, a man without spectacles is only half-alive. In theory, I suppose, a man ought to be able to sit down and think, but I cannot sit down and think unless I have a book in my hand. I do not need to read the book, but I need to know

that I could read the book if I wished to do so. If I cannot, I am irritated, feeling cut off, an alien in the civilized world. How our ancestors endured life before the invention of spectacles, I cannot conceive. Potter reduced me to their level for a day or two, and I certainly hated it. I have forgiven him, however. Still, I wish my hostess had not been in such a hurry to tell that abominable lie and to pretend that breaking my spectacles didn't matter.

EXPERIMENT IN THE NURSERY

AN eminent woman doctor has been disturbing the peace of two families by telling on excellent authority the story of an experiment made by Huxley and Darwin on Huxley's baby. Huxley, it was said, held the infant in his arms while Darwin pricked it with a pin and then made notes on its reactions to pin-pricking. It is never safe to believe stories told on good authority. At least half of them are untrue. Either there has been a mishearing somewhere, or a misunderstanding, or a misremembering: there are scores of ways in which a story gets distorted with no dishonesty in the process. Sometimes it ceases even to be about the person of whom it was originally told. And, in any case, every hearer who repeats it translates it afresh. Hence it is always best to test the good authority of a story by its credibility. As regards Darwin and Huxley, I should say that particular story should have been dismissed as incredible. It would have made a perfect subject for a Max Beerbohm caricature of the simple enthusiasm of men of science. To

believe it is like mistaking a Max Beerbohm caricature for an exact historical record.

If it were told about some modern men of science, it would be easier to believe it. We have marched since the Victorian era, and the sacred rights of experiment are more generally recognized. Children may be more indulgently treated in some respects; but men of science are on their trail and it would never be surprising to catch an ardent experimenter sticking a pin into one of them to see what it would do, when he thought no one was looking. We read, for instance, concerning two American experimenters, that 'reactions of various kinds—to noise, deprivation of food, pricking with a needle, restraint, dropping, and others—were induced in infants.' The Victorian father would never have thought of that sort of thing. He was desperately anxious not to drop his baby: there are moderns, however, whose devotion to science is apparently at least equal to their devotion to their babies and who will drop the baby simply in order to see what happens. Similarly, it was the old-fashioned way, when an infant was hungry, to feed it: to-day, there are enthusiasts who will deliberately let it go hungry in order to study its muscular and emotional reactions to hunger. As for pricking



THE VICTORIAN FATHER

the baby with a needle, the Victorian knew—or thought that he knew—exactly how the baby would react to the experiment and did not need to make the experiment in order to prove it. The modern experimenter, however, is a doubting Thomas who can scarcely believe that it hurts a child to be pricked with a needle till he has heard it cry out.

Another American investigator, writing recently on 'how the behaviourist works,' has described what we must do in order to know about the behaviour of a child. 'In order to get a picture of his emotional behaviour,' he tells us, 'we have to test separation from his mother. . . . We must rob him of his toys, of things he is playing with. We must let a bigger boy or girl bully him, we must put him in high places, on ledges (making injury impossible, however), on the backs of ponies or dogs.' From the point of view of science for science's sake I do not quite like the look of that clause 'making injury impossible, however.' After all, it would be interesting to know whether, if the child fell off the ledge down a twenty-feet precipice, it would break its neck. Science, I believe, cannot yet tell us the exact distance which a baby needs to fall in order to break its neck. Would it not be well to have

the thing proved once and for all? Even as regards the experiment of robbing the child of its toys, why not go a little further and jump on the toys till they are smashed to bits, the



JUMP ON TOYS AND MAKE MANIACAL FACES

investigator meanwhile making maniacal faces at the child to discover whether its prevailing emotion is fury, self-pity, or helpless terror? Much might be learnt, too, by gradually allowing the bullying to increase from simple teasing to nipping and pinching and so on to hair-pulling: it would be interesting to know

whether the small boy who had his hair pulled by a bigger boy responded by screaming or by kicking his persecutor hard on the shins. After enumerating these methods of studying the behaviour of children, the psychologist remarks: 'I am giving you a picture of how we work just to convince you of the simplicity, naturalness, and accuracy of our methods.' I must confess that, natural as it is to rob a child of its toys, allow him to be bullied, and put him on ledges, it seems to me that we shall be putting artificial restraints on nature if we make injury impossible. Nature has always been partial to injury.

Some of these psychological experiments on infants, however, suggest that the psychologist is more of a playmate than an inhuman devotee of science. Thus, the writer from whom I have quoted tells us how he early discovered that 'loud sounds almost invariably produce a marked reaction in infants from the very moment of birth,' and how he went on proving it in the most playful manner. First, he made the new-born baby jump by striking a steel bar with a hammer. Then, he found that some low sounds as well as loud ones called out 'fear responses.' 'In the half-sleeping infant of two or three days of age,' he declares, 'I have

called them out repeatedly by suddenly crinkling a half of a newspaper near its ear, and by making a loud, shrill, hissing sound with the lips.' How much pleasanter this must be for the baby than to have to listen to the cracked voice of a nurse singing *Ye Banks and Braes* or *Old Dog Tray*! Trailing clouds of glory, the infant is at once plunged into the rival glories of Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday—into all the lovely cacophony of squeaking balloons, tin trumpets, buzzers, and steam-engines. At a later stage of childhood, the fun will become still more fast and furious. He may be as lucky, for example, as little Peter, aged three, whose fear-responses were called out by a white rat. 'Peter was put in a crib in a play-room and immediately became absorbed in his toys. A white rat was introduced into the crib from behind.' (The experimenter was behind a screen.) 'At sight of the rat, Peter screamed and fell flat on his back in a paroxysm of fear.' There is no space to go into the steps by which, after many tribulations, Peter's 're-action to white rats was greatly improved.' Soon he was able to handle a mouse and a tangled mass of earthworms like a little man. By this time, no doubt, he is a great lover of animals, and a prominent member of Our Dumb Friends' League.

I could not help thinking, when I read of these experiments, how much the science of grown-up investigators resembles the teasing practices of the young. The child is a born experimenter. He will experiment with himself as well as with others. Most of us in our childhood have passed our forefinger through a gas-flame or a candle-flame. We wanted, I suppose, partly to see whether we could do this without hurting ourselves and partly to test our courage. As for experiments on others, what but an experimenter is the small boy who takes a mouse to a dame school in a box and lets it loose in the class-room? How keenly he studies the fear-responses of the schoolmistress and the screaming schoolgirls!

One boy whom I knew used to leave nails upside down on the road in the early days of pneumatic tyres. At the age of ten he knew more about the emotional responses of cyclists than you or I could learn in a lifetime. Then there was a youth who, when smoking a forbidden cigarette, used to invite you to put your finger on his lowest waistcoat button if you wanted to see the smoke coming out of his eyes: as soon as the innocent victim was looking for the smoke, with his hand in the right position, the youth would quickly bring the

burning cigarette down on the back of the trusting hand. By this means he learned that burning produced a pain-response in the burned.

Was not Mr. Churchill also an experimenter when, on his first day at school, he went up behind the diminutive Mr. Amery and pushed him into a deep pond? He simply wanted to see what would happen. He would have known what would happen, if he had realized that Mr. Amery was his senior and as muscular as he was quick-tempered. When he did to his horror realize this, he did not pause to study Mr. Amery's emotional responses, but ran for his life. Even so, however, he did learn one valuable lesson as a result of his experiment—that it is not safe to judge by appearances.

And so we might go on through the long list of booby-traps—bricks put under hats for foolish men to kick, and so forth—and see in them all the enthusiastic experiments of young amateur psychologists. I am convinced that half the so-called cruelties of children are the result, not of sadism, but of psychological curiosity. We do our best, however, to limit the activities of psychological curiosity in the young. We draw the line at their deliberately sticking pins into babies. I am not sure that pins, and

white rats, and such things, ought not to have restrictions imposed on their use among psychologists as well as among schoolboys. In a really civilized country any psychologist seen lurking near a cradle with a pin would be disarmed and handed over to the police.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I HAVE often been filled with astonishment at the enormous amount of intellectual and manual activity that is devoted year by year to the composition of letters to the editor. The letter to the editor is, I believe, a comparatively new literary form; yet it is a form that is already far more widely cultivated than the poem or the story. Men who despise poets as highbrows feel their fingers itching to write letters to the editor.

Most of them, I suppose, regard themselves as hard-headed, practical men, but in point of fact they are among the most disinterested and unpractical of literary artists. Nearly every other literary artist expects to be paid for his work. Mr. Shaw will not allow his plays to be produced for nothing. Mr. Wells is magnificently disinterested in his passion for human progress, but he did not brush aside the royalties that were due to him from his *Outline of History*. Yet, when it comes to writing letters to the editor, Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells become as dreamy and unpractical as poets are commonly

supposed to be. In order to get into the correspondence column Mr. Shaw is ready to write a thousand words about the Danakils for nothing; and Mr. Wells has often provided a paper with its liveliest contribution gratis on the sole condition that he was allowed to begin it with the word 'Sir.' It is the same with many other eminent modern writers; and painters, sculptors, architects, and musicians are equally indifferent to money when under the influence of this form of *cacoethes scribendi*.

When our century comes to be judged by the historians, and the post-Marxians denounce us as a generation of greedy individualists who worked only for profit, I hope all the mass of unpaid service involved in the writing of letters to the editor will be remembered in our favour. Think of the lifelong industry of Mr. Algernon Ashton and the Rev. J. P. Bacon-Philips. Milton, it is said, made only £5 out of *Paradise Lost*. Did Mr. Ashton make even five shillings, or expect to make it, out of all the thousands of letters he has written to the newspapers? Here, at least, is one bright spot in our *bourgeois* civilization—a foretaste of William Morris's money-contemptuous Utopia.

It is true that many letters to the editor are written, not from a purely artistic necessity,

but partly in order to air a grievance. Thus, when we find a letter beginning: 'I very much regret to note your slighting reference to sanitary inspectors,' we take it for granted that the writer has been annoyed by a slur on the dignity of his profession, and is anxious to right himself in the eyes of the world. On the other hand, when the writer is a man who has seen a quotation that he liked on a tear-off calendar, and has sat down to communicate his discovery to an editor, adding: 'It is by George Herbert. Can you tell me more about him?' we realize that this letter was the result of a purely artistic impulse with no selfish alloy. It is obviously a fairly easy thing in any part of England to find out something about George Herbert without writing to an editor. There are cheap books and free libraries, and the local curate or Methodist minister could be consulted. The born letter-writer will have none of these easy aids to instruction, however. He wants an excuse for writing a letter and exercising his genius, and loves his question even more than he longs for the answer.

So, at least, I interpret him as I read his letters. For what other purpose except that of self-expression could a lady write a letter to the editor asking for suggestions for a name for

her Guernsey bungalow which is 'low-lying, flat-roofed, the result of hard work and hopes'? Surely there is no one on earth so lacking in ingenuity or, at least, in moderately ingenious friends, as to be unable to discover a suitable name for a bungalow without writing to a great newspaper! Most of us could propose a hundred names without a moment's thought—'Chatsworth,' 'Blenheim,' 'Nirvana,' 'Journey's End,' 'Iodine,' 'Chlorine'—anything you please. I doubt, however, whether the letter-writer wants to know these names so much as she wants to write. It is the same in conversation. Many people ask questions not because they want to know the answers, but because they want to talk; some of them do not listen to the answers. Similarly, I believe that the correspondents who wrote letters in reply to the Guernsey lady had no genuine desire to help her, but were moved solely by a desire to make use of their talent for letter-writing. Imagine the creative ecstasy of the correspondent who wrote: 'May I suggest—"Excelsior"?' Think of the Rabelaisian joy of the lady who wrote to suggest 'Dam-fino,' or of the lyrical rapture of the other lady who proposed 'Tranquilla' with its suggestion of peace. It is true that some of these names may be more

suitable to such a dwelling as the low-lying, flat-roofed Guernsey bungalow than 'Chatsworth.' My point is, however, that anybody except a predestined letter-writer can find a name for a bungalow as easily as he can find a name for a cat. Edmund Gosse did not write to the papers asking what he should call his black-and-white cat. He called it 'Buchanan.'

Many of the letters to editors, however, it must be admitted, are tainted by a genuine desire for information. Thus we find a Catford correspondent writing: 'To my intense surprise it has been pointed out to me that the average person's top teeth slightly overlap the lower teeth when the mouth is closed. In my own case top and bottom teeth are level all round—in fact, at one point the top teeth fall slightly inside the bottom. Is this unique?' It is easy to imagine the half-alarm, half-pride with which the correspondent realized for the first time that he was not as other men. It is always pleasant to discover that one resembles Julius Caesar or Napoleon or some other freak of genius if it is only in the oddity of one's ears. Might not the original contour of his teeth mark a man out for great things? There may be boastfulness indeed as well as desire for information in such a letter as this. That is

nothing against the letter as a work of art, however. Many great writers have been boastful. See the Sonnets of Shakespeare.

Boastfulness, again, is the characteristic of the married woman's letter in which she speaks scornfully of cookery as a magnet for masculine love. 'Before I married,' she writes, 'I couldn't cook water. My assets were paint, varnish, a cultivated flair for expensive-looking clothes made cheaply, and a gay and pleasing manner. Result: six suitors. Domesticity is woman's birthright and is soon mastered. The average man is romantic . . . and dishes are not glamorous.' That letter is surely a piece of triumphant self-expression—the work of a true artist. With those six suitors, there is enough plot in it to fill an eight-and-sixpenny novel. Many sad husbands might dispute the truth of the last phrase: 'Dishes are not glamorous'; but, at least, they could not deny that it is a perfect statement of a by no means uncommon woman's point of view. As the world progresses, 'Dishes Are Not Glamorous' is a motto that is likely to be hung up more and more generally in English houses in place of the old-fashioned 'God Bless Our Home.' One result will be a revival of club life.

What strikes me as odd about all these wonder-

ful letters to the editor is not only that the writers write them for nothing, but that most of them are things that the editor would not think worth printing if they were sent in as articles or paragraphs. And most of us who read them eagerly as letters would pass nine out of ten of them unread if they appeared anywhere except in the correspondence column. Dishes may not be glamorous, but letters to the editor are. Why do they exercise this enticement on us? They stir our curiosity like the questions at the end of a public meeting. It may be that we feel that here the members of the great public take their fling and give us a holiday from formality. Whatever the reason, we read the stuff. Most of us, in our more inspired moments, even write it. I myself compose several letters to the editor weekly—in my head—and, if it were not for the manual labour involved, I should write them. ‘Sir,’ I should begin. . . . I, too, in my dreams have a soul above money, the soul of an artist.

WHY ?

'WHY,' asks someone in the *Sunday Times*, 'must we call Praha Prague, Firenze Florence, and Vlissingen Flushing?' The most reasonable answer seems to be: 'In order that we may be understood by other English-speakers.' If one does not mind whether one is understood or not, one is at perfect liberty to call Flushing Vlissingen, and no doubt one would call it Vlissingen if one were talking to a native of the place. After all we call London itself by all kinds of names according to what country we happen to be visiting. If we are in France and talking to a Frenchman, we call it Londres. If we are in Italy, we call it Londra; and, if we were in Turkey, we should probably call it something else. Nobody seems to be a penny the worse as a result of this arrangement.

It seems to me a rather pretty arrangement. If we must pay the penalty for the sin of the builders of the Tower of Babel, we may as well enjoy the luxury of inventing all sort of names for places. Why should we meekly accept the names that foreigners have given their

countries and cities ? If Germans choose to call their country Deutschland, that is their own affair. The Englishman, however, seeing it on the map, prefers to call it Germany, and the Frenchman decides that for his part he likes to think of it as l'Allemagne. If one were a mere theorist, one would imagine that extraordinary confusion must result from every country's having so many aliases. But, in point of fact, there is no confusion, and national languages look all the more charming because of all the unnecessary names they contain for foreign countries and towns.

One of the worst signs of modern times is our increasing incapacity to invent new names for the new places that are being continually added to the map. In the luxuriant days of the Elizabethans, speakers of English would not have been content with the names foreigners have given such places as Brno, Ljubljana, and Gdynia. The creative genius of the language would have moulded each of these horrid names into an English shape. These names are un-English just as the name of London is un-French. The English-speaking races, however, have become strangely submissive during the present century. First, they give up St. Petersburg for Petrograd, and then they give up

Petrograd for Leningrad. This, it seems to me, is a mark of decadence in the descendants of a race that once renamed Livorno Leghorn. Why should Englishmen abandon their right to call any foreign city by any name they please? They showed weakness again when they fell in with the Norwegian caprice of rechristening or dechristening a famous city Oslo. The correct thing to do at the time would have been to let it be known that there was already a word in English for Oslo, and that no good purpose could be served by changing it. After all, Scotsmen feel no resentment because the French refuse to call Scotland Scotland or Edinburgh Edinburgh. They admit the right of the French to invent their own names for everything in the universe from the sun, moon, and stars down. That is the true international spirit. If you have ever heard a Frenchman who knew no English trying to pronounce the name of the city of Birmingham, you must have realized how much misunderstanding can result from the absence of a foreign name for a famous place. I once met a Frenchman who told me that he had been visiting Birmingham, and for a considerable time I could not understand that it was Birmingham he was talking about, simply because

he was doing his best to call it Birmingham. It is a word totally unsuited to French pronunciation. If the French had had their own name for the place, something like Bermenges, I should have understood at once. That is why to my mind the multiplication of aliases for countries and places is a matter of some international importance.

The English soldiers in the war behaved in the best linguistic tradition when they gave up the attempt to pronounce the name of Ypres as the natives pronounce it and boldly called it Wipers. Unfortunately officialdom gave them no support but accepted the foreign names of foreign places all over the map of Europe. Thus we had Government references to places with names like Przmzl. I will not swear to the accuracy of the spelling, but the name was one that ought obviously to have been remodeled for English consumption. After all, the English have been renaming foreign places ever since they learned to talk English. After the invasion of Ireland, they proceeded bit by bit to rename every town, village, and river in the country. They found a place with the charming name Baile-bun-dhà-abhainn, and gave it the English name Ballybunion. It is not an ideally beautiful name, but it is at least more intelligible

than any attempt on the part of Englishmen to pronounce the original would have been. Similarly the English put an English shape even on the names of Irish men and women. If they found a man called Aodh O Dhubhthaigh they wisely refrained from attempting to pronounce the name and spelt and called him Hugh Duffy, a name more in consonance with the genius of the English language. The Irish rightly retaliated and called England Sasana, and the North of England Cúige Uladh i Sasana (which means Ulster in England—an appellation of profound significance, since it recognizes that the difference between north and south is not a merely Irish characteristic, but exists in other countries as well).

The fact that the custom of renaming other people's countries and towns is universal suggests that there is something to be said for it. I object to it only when the renaming is compulsory and a sign of conquest. Since the war various nations have had a mania for renaming places in annexed territories. They have taken the matter too seriously, as nearly everything is taken too seriously nowadays. Nowadays? Well, to say that is perhaps to imply that human beings were once sane—a suggestion that, after dipping into history, I see no reason for making.

From the earliest times human beings have taken names far too seriously, and in age after age a conquest of arms has been followed by a conquest of nomenclature. At one period the English passed a law forbidding any Irishman to use his Gaelic name and ordering every Irishman instead to take the name of some occupation or colour, such as Fisher or Green. Fortunately, it is easier to make a law than to compel obedience to it. The names of a people survive centuries of conquest, and the Ryans and the Dwyers have outstayed their invaders.

It is curious, however, since human beings regard names so seriously, that no nation has ever yet gone to war on the ground that its chief place names had been deliberately altered by some other country. After all, as individuals, we strongly object to having our names even mispronounced. A famous man of the last generation had the reputation of deliberately mispronouncing the name of any one he disliked. I was told that he always mispronounced mine. The misspelling of our names is equally offensive. Mr. A. G. Gardiner once wrote a delightful essay on the subject of a man called Thompson who was continually getting letters with his name spelt Thomson in the address.

One gathered from the essay that Mr. Gardiner's own name had suffered mutilation in similar fashion; and no man but a Stoic philosopher can bear with equanimity the loss or alteration of a single letter in his family name. Those who are born into the Thompson family feel that it is the *p* that makes all the difference and sets them aristocratically apart from the Thomsons. The Thomsons similarly feel that it is the *p* that makes all the difference and that its absence from their name sets them aristocratically apart from the Thompsons. We have learnt to spell so well that we no longer concede, as they did in the illiterate days of Shakespeare, the right of everybody to spell everybody else's name according to taste. To address Smith as Smyth, or vice versa, is an insult.

Yet nations, so much touchier than individuals in some respects, do not seem to care how other nations mispronounce or misspell their names. The French have never made it a grievance that the English barbarously mispronounce the names both of France and of its capital. The Italians have never sent an ambassador to request that English people shall no longer persist in referring to Roma as Rome and to Napoli as Naples. Yet is the name of Paris not as precious as that of Thompson ?

Is the name of Roma not as sacred as that of Smith ? The answer in both cases is : 'It is.' Yet nobody cares. For some obscure reason this is a matter in regard to which the nations of the earth have chosen to behave sanely. How rare and how refreshing a spirit ! In view of so noble an example, I cannot do less than let it be known that my friends, enemies, and correspondents are henceforth at liberty to misspell or mispronounce my name as they please.

LIKING DOGS

As I glanced over Mr. Kipling's collection of his stories about dogs, I could not help wondering how it came that I never enjoyed those emotional experiences that seem to heighten life for the dog-lover. It is not that I have a positive dislike of dogs: it is merely that they mean nothing to me and that I have no wish for their company. If a dog approaches me with a proper good will shown by the movements of his tail, I can pat him on the head with any man. But there is no genuine warmth of affection in my patting: I am relieved rather than otherwise when he transfers his attentions to somebody else. This is all the more curious, because I find it easy to like almost any tame animal, from a horse to a hen, from a cow to a cat. As a child I could spend hours in a stable without boredom, and to sit on the bare back of a plough-horse, holding on by his mane as he was led to the pond for his evening drink, was to be a boy enthroned. To hold the reins in the polo-cart on the three-mile drive to church on Sunday was to make a

pleasure of Sabbath-keeping. In my dreams I always saw myself as an owner of horses, and to the present day I cannot look on the invention of the motor car as an unmixed blessing, since it dooms the noblest of the domestic animals to much the same fate to which the spread of civilization doomed the Red Indian.

A boy to-day could probably listen without a pang to a prophecy of the ultimate disappearance of the horse from the earth. Forty or fifty years ago, a world without horses would have seemed to a boy scarcely worth living in. It is true that in my conception of heaven no horses paced the golden streets. But then, if the truth must be told, at that time heaven seemed to me a desirable place, not so much because it was an improvement on earth, as because it was the alternative to hell. In childhood, I imagine, most of us, if we were offered the choice between immortality on earth (with our relations sharing our immortality) and immortality in heaven, would choose immortality on earth. But it would have had to be an earth full of horses—bay horses, black horses, grey horses, roan horses, piebald horses—thoroughbreds, Clydesdales, horses without any breeding at all, and Shetland ponies.

To the childish heart the cow seldom makes

so strong an appeal as the horse. The cow lacks that quick intelligence that responds to human speech. The horse knows what you mean when you say 'Gee!' or 'Aff!' or when your tongue makes the sound that may be represented by 'Trrrck!' and he obeys you. The horse and the human being act in close partnership. There is no such partnership between the human being and the cow. Even when the cows come to the gate of the field at milking-time in answer to such calls as 'Chay-chay!' it is the urgency of the desire to be milked rather than an understanding of human speech that brings them to you. As they shamble listlessly along the road to the farmyard, you have no sense of telepathic communication between their vacant minds and yours. Even so, it is very pleasant to walk behind a dozen cows or so and feel that you are in absolute command of a drove of these large horned creatures. I have liked many cows and known them by their names, and I cannot imagine an earthly paradise without them.

I cannot profess to have had the same affection for pigs. I like to look at them: I like their shape and the ways of their young, but I do not remember ever having known a pig by name. They are, apart from their usefulness,

mere decorations of the earth, and there is no real friendship between them and our race. Yet as a child I was more interested in pigs than in dogs. Nor did I ever find dogs half so interesting as hens or ducks or sheep.

I do not know whether it is natural to like dogs. When one reflects for how many centuries the word 'dog' has been used in an opprobrious sense — that 'hound,' 'cur,' and 'puppy' are alike still words of offence—one cannot help wondering whether the relations of dogs and men can always have been as cordial as they are in these highly civilized days. May it not be some streak of the primitive man in me that shrinks from the companionship of these most generally loved of the animals? It is possible, but it is more probable that my incapacity for dog-worship may be explained by the fact that I was brought up in a house without dogs, and that, when I went to stay at my grandfather's in the country, the two dogs at the farmhouse were as disagreeable as even a dog-hater could imagine. One of them was a fierce black retriever housed in a barrel laid on its side, and living in perpetual rebellion against the chain that held him. He leaped at every visitor that passed as if he meant to eat him. We were warned to give him a wide

berth on our way to the gooseberry garden behind his barrel, and I always made as cautious a circle round him as if he had been a chained lion with a particularly weak link in the chain. I might have admired him if I had seen him in a cage in a zoo, but, as it was, I looked on him as a wild beast whose sole purpose in life was to tear thieves to pieces if they came near the farm at night. The other dog was scarcely more charming. He was a smooth-haired terrier, very old, very fat, and nearly blind. He lay all day at the side of the open turf-fire under the wooden arm-chair in which sat my grandfather, very old and nearly blind, like the dog himself. He had lost all interest in the world, apart from his devotion to my grandfather, and seldom moved except when my grandfather rose from his chair, and with the help of his huge stick walked slowly out into the farm-yard. At first, I was ready to make friends with the dog: he looked so helpless and so harmless. When I put my hand on his head, however, he growled and snapped in protest, and I was warned that the only human being whom he would permit to touch him even in the friendliest fashion was my grandfather. Naturally enough, staying on a farm with two dogs that seemed to be famous only

for their biting proclivities—a dog to bite you inside the house and a dog to bite you outside the house—I made no effort to cultivate their company. Every other animal on the farm was associated with happiness—horses that could have killed you with a kick but did not, cows that could have stuck you with their horns but did not, hens and chickens that ran races to you as to a benefactor at feeding-time. The very gander that threatened you with outstretched neck was amenable to reason. The dogs alone were eternal enemies to the stranger—contributing, not to the pleasures, but to the perils of country life.

Add to this the fact that, about the same time, scares about mad dogs were common. To be bitten by a sane dog is bad enough; but to be bitten by a mad dog is a possibility the thought of which makes the knees totter. I had heard many tales of hydrophobia, and lived in constant terror of it during the hot months of the year. I think I was at that period more afraid of being bitten by a mad dog than of anything else in the world. There was a poem in one of the recitation-books that described the heroic behaviour of a blacksmith who had seized a mad dog with his hands in order to protect some children and who, after he was

bitten, ordered the neighbours to tie him up so as to make him helpless to do them an injury when madness had overtaken him. I do not remember the poem clearly, but I always had a vision of the blacksmith foaming at the mouth as he struggled with his bonds and dying in agony. As a result, whenever a rumour spread that a mad dog was roaming the countryside, I was filled with the most terrible apprehensions. I scrutinized with the greatest suspicion every dog that approached me on the road, and it did not require much effort to imagine white foam round his mouth. Sometimes, when passing a pond or the edge of the sea, I have walked into the water in my shoes and stockings and remained there till a perfectly sane and good-natured dog had gone by. There was some outcry afterwards when a law was passed ordering dogs to be muzzled, but I must confess I should have felt a great deal happier if dogs had been born muzzled.

My first introductions to dogs, it will be seen, were not auspicious. I regret this, for I should like to be able to like a dog as much as some of my friends like dogs. I cannot help believing that the love of dogs is the source of one of the eminent pleasures of life, but I cannot honestly say that I loved even the

racing greyhound that came into my possession by accident. I thought of him kindly, I wished him well, but my spirit groaned within me every time I had to take him for a walk in the shades of darkness to stretch his limbs. I like to see greyhounds racing, and, particularly, leaping over hurdles; but going for a long walk with a greyhound seems to me an experience as little to be sought after as going for a long walk with the club bore. How little I appreciated it may be judged from the fact that before long I gave him away to a real dog-lover who allowed him to sleep at the foot of his bed.

If dogs remained at the puppy stage all their lives, I think I might make shift to love one of them. But the full-grown creature with his passion for pedestrianism can never, I fear, be a friend of mine. This is, I realize, my loss more than the dog's. I am confessing to a deficiency in my make-up, like a man who regrets his tone-deafness or colour-blindness. At the same time, when I think of my cat, I begin to wonder whether my wish to be able to like dogs is not a little disloyal. There must be a fairly good case to be made out against an animal that not only needs to be taken for long walks, but is a notorious cat-chaser.

VALEDICTION

WHEN it was first announced that Clifford Sharp was to be editor of a forthcoming weekly paper, to be called the *New Statesman*, those who did not yet know him took it for granted that he would be editor only in name, and that the Webbs would be the real editors. One did not need to meet Sharp many times, however, in order to realize that he was not a man born to play the part of a mechanical subordinate or an echo, even if the Webbs had wished him to do so. And the Webbs did not wish him to do so. Having chosen their man, they made it clear that it was he who was in control of the paper and that, in case of a difference of opinion, his was to be the deciding voice. More than once, after a lively argument on a point of policy during one of the editorial lunches at the Webbs' house in Grosvenor Road, I have heard Mr. Webb end the discussion with a smiling: 'Well, Sharp, you're the editor, and you must decide.'

Sharp, indeed, was a dominating figure in any serious argument. Tall and strong-shouldered, he had been a boxer in his student days, and he

remained pugnacious during his life, enjoying the fight of words. Many people thought him aggressive, but, if he was, he was also peculiarly reasonable, and would readily accept his opponent's point of view when he saw that it was really more reasonable than his own. This does not mean that he was a weathercock in his opinions, but that he had no vain prejudice in favour of his own opinions, and that he was quick to seize on any new facts that suggested the need of modifying them. I remember going to see him with another visitor on the day of the first executions after the Dublin rising of 1916. The visitor said: 'This is terrible news.' Sharp looked up in surprise. He asked abruptly what could rebel leaders expect. The visitor, trying a new line of argument, pointed out the folly of the executions and foretold the consequences much as they afterwards happened. Sharp continued to argue, but, after thinking the matter over, he evidently decided that the visitor was right, for he denounced the executions in the next issue of the paper.

His attitude to the executions revealed the deep temperamental gulf that separated him and H. W. Massingham, then editor of the *Nation*. Massingham recoiled from the executions through his instinctive hatred of blood-

shed: Sharp was turned against them by his instinctive contempt for folly and stupidity. There was nothing that he was less moved by than what is called humanitarianism. He would support humane causes, but not on humanitarian principles. He was impatient of Galsworthy's method of defending the 'rights' of animals, and could never be fair to him. His early hostility to Liberalism in politics was due partly to his feeling that too many Liberals were sentimentalists. He objected, indeed, to the whole 'rights of man' way of approaching the problems of politics, and maintained that there was no justification for assuming that human beings possessed any natural rights, except, perhaps, the right of equality.

This hard attitude of Sharp's was infinitely valuable for the purpose of furthering the principles for which he stood. There were already plenty of good writers appealing to the emotions—or to the mingled emotions and intelligence—on behalf of good causes. Sharp directed his attack as far as possible entirely to the intelligence. He addressed himself, not to a world of idealists, but to a world of men of mixed motives who might be influenced, not by being shown that a cause was noble so much as by being persuaded that it was the most

intelligent cause to support. Thus, during a strike he would always draw his arguments on behalf of the strikers from his head rather than from his heart. On the eve of the General Strike, a very 'red' Socialist met him, and believing him to be a reactionary, asked him challengingly what the *New Statesman* would have to say about the General Strike. Sharp replied: 'My dear man, you will find the policy of the *New Statesman* on all strikes in an article in one of the early numbers. The article was called, "The Men Are Always Right."' By this he did not mean that he had any passionate enthusiasm for the proletariat. He meant simply that, if immense bodies of men and women throw up their livelihood and risk starvation for their families, it stands to reason that they must have real grievances that should be remedied.

At the same time, any one who thought of Sharp as merely a hard, reasonable political journalist would be widely off the mark. What gave power to his writing was the profoundly emotional nature that underlay it, even when he suppressed it effectively. He was high-strung, excitable, and enthusiastic, and I sometimes told him that, if he became a convert to religion, he would be a fanatic. He replied that in his youth he had nearly had this

experience and that once, at a Revivalist meeting addressed by that great evangelist, the Rev. F. B. Meyer, he had had the greatest difficulty in keeping to his seat and in not rising up and testifying. You had only to talk to him about books in order to discover the enthusiasm that was in his blood. When he read *The Brook Kerith* and *The Idiot* for the first time, he talked of them almost like a man who had had a divine revelation. His enthusiasm for his friends and his colleagues was equally extreme. His colleagues sometimes thought that he was reticent in praise and brusque over their masterpieces, but how he praised them behind their backs—occasionally, perhaps, damned them and praised them by turns—but how he praised them! He was not above enjoying a compliment on his own work, but it seemed to me that he took still more pride in a compliment paid to one of his contributors.

His enthusiasm was apparent again in his devotion to Lord and Lady Oxford. Lord Oxford, though a Liberal, was to Sharp almost the ideal statesman. If there were two things that Sharp worshipped above all others in public life, they were sanity and disinterestedness, and he loved Lord Oxford as the incarnation of both these qualities. He loathed doctrinaires as

heartily as Burke, and held that what might be described either as the higher opportunism or as disinterested pragmatism was the only sane principle to follow in the government of mankind.

Sharp himself was an exceptionally disinterested man. I have never known another man of so powerful a personality who was so lacking in ambition. I always felt sure that if he had had political ambitions he would have become at least a Cabinet Minister, and that if he had been ambitious of success in the law he would have become a great barrister. He had an imperfect delivery as a speaker, but his clear perception of the facts of a case, his vigorous English sentences, and the confidence of his attack would have made up for this. He realized his powers, but he always declared that he could not want anything enough to go to the trouble of trying to get it. He did not even very much want to be an editor and help to mould the political life of his country. In paradoxical moods he would often declare that he wasn't really interested in politics, and that, if he had private means, he would never look at a newspaper to see what was happening.

This, of course, was incredible to any one who knew him. He had a passion for conversation, and his conversation was as eager about politics

as about people, ethics, lawn tennis, bridge, food, wine, medicine, or any other subject. It was not mere will-power but instinctive interest that made him, after assuming the editorship of the *New Statesman*, so determined to master the underlying facts of the changing political situation. As an editor, he was as conscientious as he was brilliant. Far from being a natural journalist, he was a slow and painstaking writer, careful about his facts (though sometimes rash), and equally careful about the English in which they were to be clothed. He hated slovenliness in phrase as he hated slovenliness in thought. As a writer he was conspicuously courageous, being indifferent to personal popularity. As an editor he was, to my mind, a man of genius, a great captain of his team, till his health was undermined.

When I last saw him, he was taking home Mr. Desmond MacCarthy's last book with its generous dedicatory tribute to him. During his life he and his friends were rarely outspoken in their sentiments towards each other, but those who were closest to him will always remember him as a man who was generous as a colleague, and who, as a friend, for all his reticence, gave and craved for the deepest affection.

TALL MEN

WHEN I saw the heading, 'Tall Men Are Depressed,' in a newspaper the other day, I read on with sharpened interest; for I am myself a six-footer, or was until I settled down into a lifelong stoop. Such is human egotism that tall men are especially interested in what is said about tall men, just as red-haired men will listen to a theory about red-haired men with keener attention than to a theory about men whose hair is dark or fair. In spite of the fact that I am a tall man, however, I never had any theory about tall men except that they are less fortunate than short men, whom Nature has compressed into bundles of energy and who can move about inconspicuously in a crowd. Even though I was both tall and depressed, I never connected my depression with the fact that I was tall. I attributed my depression partly to weakness of character, partly to weakness of constitution, and partly to the misbehaviour of a world that would apparently rather live on the edge of a volcano than in the Garden of Eden. From my earliest years, the world

seemed an unnecessarily dangerous place—not at all a world fit for pleasure-loving children. It was depressing to know that the Pope, having learnt nothing from the history of his predecessors, was still spending his nights and days planning a massacre of the Protestants of Belfast. My depression would have been greatly relieved, I am sure, if I had been told that the Pope and all his followers had announced their conversion to Protestantism. Even if the Pope had come over to us, however, there would still have remained the Devil—the most depressing of neighbours for a would-be-happy child. He was a sneaking sort of fellow who would even try to overhear one's prayers in the hope that he might be able to thwart them. He was a prowler, a threat to peace, a fiend who by duping a foolish woman had doomed us all to death and some of us to all manner of torments after death. One did not need to be very tall in order to be able to realize that here was something well worth being depressed about. Even quite short-legged children grew melancholy when they thought of the monster going about like a roaring lion through the countryside.

At the same time, it would be foolish to imagine that we were continuously, or even usually unhappy. There are few things more

difficult for an ordinary human being than to keep depressed all the time. In childhood even the profoundest melancholy disappears at sight of a buttered bun or of a two-shilling bit. The Powers of Darkness may be awe-inspiring enough when we think of them, but the boy with a bottle on his way to fish for sticklebacks has other things to think about than the Powers of Darkness. Gladstone might be the most malevolent fiend in human form since Napoleon, but the menace of Gladstone somehow seemed less serious when one was taken to see a newly-born foal. I suspect that almost every child is in large measure an Epicurean who possesses the great art of living for the moment—not constantly, but at least often enough to prevent it from sinking into melancholia. Besides, in spite of its apprehensions, the child has a fortunate way of seeing its world as a static and permanent place. It has confidence in the solidity of its surroundings, in the continuance of its friends and relations. I thought a great deal about death as a child and often lay awake in misery because I knew that we were all doomed to die and that it was, alas, impossible that we should all die on the same day. These melancholy thoughts did not survive into daylight, however. By morning I

was back into the solid world of living people—of people of whom I could think only as going on living. On the whole the world seemed a good place and, if it had not been for Gladstone, might even have seemed a perfect place.

Whether I could have enjoyed these bursts of cheerfulness if I had foreseen the way in which the world was later to behave, I cannot say. I fancy that so long-legged a youth would have felt depressed to the midriff at the prospect. Everything that happened in those days, however, seemed a step in the direction of a happier and more stable world. The defeat of the Home Rule Bill—what a cause of joy! The end of the Boer War—had not the reign of peace arrived at last? Socialism had not yet arrived, but when I became a Socialist I took it for granted that in a world of reason it would arrive peaceably. Ireland was not yet free, but here, too, reason and passive resistance could achieve all her desires. All my life I seem to have been fixing some date at which the Golden Age would have at last begun. I have constantly deceived myself into believing that, if such and such a thing happened all would be well, or at least all would be well on the way to being well. The end of the War, the Kerensky revolution, the signing of the

Irish Treaty—each of them seemed the birthday of a new world. I would have sworn on each occasion that now everything was going to be all right; for, though melancholy, I am a melancholy optimist. I find it hard to believe that the worst is going to happen in public affairs until it has actually happened. That is why I have been so much worse a prophet during the last thirty years than the cheerful pessimists.

The news item entitled 'Tall Men Are Depressed,' however, made me wonder whether my melancholy has been due so much to the misbehaviour of the world as to the length of my legs. It is true that the state of the world has a great deal to do with the state of our spirits, but it is possible that the length of our legs has even more. I have known men who, so far as I could judge them, would have maintained their cheerfulness under Nero no less than in the happier reign of Hadrian. I have met men who declared that they enjoyed the War. Riots and revolutions—there are men whose spirits seem to thrive on them. I had a letter the other day from a man who, referring to the riots that used to follow football matches in Belfast between a Protestant and a Catholic team, spoke with enthusiasm of 'those matches

that used to end in a scrap greatly to the delight of us youngsters.' The world, even when it is at its worst, is well stocked with Mark Tapleys. They are for the most part short-legged fellows who would keep up their spirits—and other people's—in an earthquake.

In contrast with them you will meet the constitutionally depressed people who are most depressed when there is nothing on earth to be depressed about. You will find them among the idle rich as in the slums. It is difficult, indeed, to be sure whether, apart from extreme poverty, the possession of money has much to do with human happiness. Mr. Shaw has written about the miseries of the idle rich as though their money contributed to their miseries. I suspect, however, that a man can be perfectly happy even as a millionaire, if only his legs are short enough. If you are born cheerful, it takes more than a million of money to depress you. If you are born depressed, on the other hand, it does not much matter whether your income is £200,000 or £200 a year. If you have £200,000, you will have time to think about your health and will imagine that you would be happy if you had a good digestion. If you have £200, you will think more about money than about health

and will imagine that, if your income were trebled, you would be the most cheerful man alive. Probably you will be right in neither case. Temperament, even more than health or money, seems to govern the spirits. Let a depressed man win an enormous prize in a sweepstake, and he will find some reason for looking on the money as an added burden. He will certainly show fewer signs of cheerfulness than a mercurial man whose horse has just lost him a small fortune by a neck.

Even though I believe, however, that high spirits and low spirits are qualities given at birth rather than the product of prosperity or adversity, I still keep an open mind about the theory which relates our prevailing moods to the length of our legs. Think of all the tall men you know, and ask yourself whether their ranks contain a greater proportion of pessimists than those of your short friends. Mr. Shaw is no midget, but he keeps up his spirits wonderfully. It would be possible to find traces of pessimism in his later plays, but pessimism does not depress Mr. Shaw: it cheers him up. Yet Mr. Shaw belongs to the leaner type of tall men, who might be expected to be melancholy. As for tall men who are fat, how often does one hear one of them referred to as 'a jovial

giant'! If you are fat, it seems to me, the length of your legs scarcely matters: the odds are that you will be cheerful. I do not know whether the Six-Foot Club still meets at dinner. If it does, a man of science should attend one of its functions and see whether the spirits of the diners are higher or lower than in an assembly of men of all shapes and sizes. It is important that this question should be settled by scientific methods, for, until the thing is absolutely certain, it is extremely unfair to add to the depression of melancholy six-footers by telling us that we were born to this. We can bear our depression so long as we believe that, if we were better men, or if the world were a better place, we could get rid of it. If we are informed, however, that it is all a matter of long legs, we shall feel that our melancholy is predestined and inescapable, and we shall become as miserable as old-fashioned Calvinists. For myself, I pin my faith to the long legs of Mr. Shaw. While these exist, I will refuse to believe that long legs necessarily mean long faces.

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